LADY CAR

By MRS. OLIPHANT

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THE SEQUEL OF A LIFE

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CHAPTER I

Lady Caroline Beaufort was supposed to be, as life goes, an unusually fortunate woman. It is true that things had not always gone well with her. In her youth she had been married almost by force—as near it as anything ever is in an age when parental tyranny is of course an anachronism—to a man unlike herself in every way—an uncultured, almost uncivilised, rich boor of the neighbourhood, the descendant of a navvy who had become a millionaire, and who inherited all the characteristics of his race along with their money, although he had never known anything of

Gowan Ray 1870 ms 52 Barfield 1890

navvydom, but had been born a Scotch country gentleman with a great estate. It is to be supposed that her father and mother believed it to be for her real good when they placed poor Car, fainting with fright and horror, in the arms of a man whose manners made even them wince, though they were forced into no such constant contact with him, for they were far from being wicked parents or bad people in any way. There is nothing in the world so difficult to understand as the motives which lead fathers and mothers to such acts, not so common as they used to be, yet not so rare as they ought to be. They think, perhaps, that a little aversion at first tells for next to nothing in the long run, and that an affectionate, gentle creature, submissive to law and custom, will end by loving any man who belongs to her, or having at least some sort of sentiment which will answer for love; and that, on the other hand, no fantastic passion of youth is to be trusted to surmount all the risks of life in the lottery of marriage, which affords so

many changed points of view; whereas wealth is a solid and unchangeable good which outlives every sentiment. These, I suppose, were the conclusions of Lord and Lady Lindores when they married their daughter to Mr. Thomas Torrance—or, rather, these were the conclusions of the Earl, in which his wife concurred very doubtfully, and with much reluctance, rather failing in courage to support her child in any effort for liberty than helping to coerce her. If Lord Lindores was determined as to the value of wealth, Lady Lindores was one of those women who have come to the silent conclusion that nothing is of any great value, and that life has no prizes at all. What does it matter? she was in the habit of saying to herself. She did not believe in happiness—a little less comfort or a little more was scarcely worth struggling for; and no doubt, as Lord Lindores said, wealth was one of the few really solid and reliable things in the world, a thing with which many minor goods could be purchased—relief to the poor, which was always a subject of satis-

faction, and other alleviations of life. Lady Car was sacrificed to these tenets. But Providence had been good to her: and while she was still young her husband had died. If he did not justify Lord Lindores' expectations in his life he did in his death. For he left everything in his wife's hands; not only had she the excellent jointure which her settlements secured her—a jointure without any mean and petty clause about marrying again—but everything was left in her hands—the control of the property during little Tom's minority, and almost every advantage which a queen-mother could have. Tom was a little fellow of six, so that a long period of supremacy was in Carry's hands, and the rough fellow whom she had almost hated, from whom her very soul had shrunk with a loathing indescribable, had done her the fullest justice. It is doubtful whether Lady Car was at all touched by these evidences of devotion on the part of a man who had bullied and oppressed her for years. But she was startled into violent and passionate compunc-

tion, extraordinary in so gentle a person, by the still wilder and more impassioned joy which swept over her soul when she heard of his sudden death. Poor Lady Car had not been able to resist that flood of exultation which took possession of her against her will. What did she want with his money? He was dead and she was free. It filled her with a guilty, boundless delight, and then with compunction beyond expression, as she tried to return from that wild joy and took herself to task.

And then, after a very short interval, she had married again; she had married what in the earlier years of the century people called the man of the heart—the lover of old days who had been dropped, who had been ignored when Lord Lindores came to his title and the prospects of the family had changed. How much Lady Caroline knew or did not know of the developments through which Mr. Beaufort had passed in the meantime no one ever discovered. She found him much as he had been when her family had dropped him, only

not so young. A man who had made no way, a man without reproach, yet without success, who had kept stationary all the time, and was still a man of promise when his contemporaries had attained all that they were likely to attain. Beaufort was poor, but Lady Car was now rich. There was not the least reason why they should not marry unless he had been fantastic and refused to do so on account of her superior wealth. But he had no such idiotic idea. So that Lady Car was considered by most people, especially those who had a turn for the sentimental, as a very lucky woman. There had been the Torrance episode when she had not been happy, and which had left her the mother of two children, destined, perhaps, some time or other, to give her trouble. But they were children amply provided for, and she had an excellent jointure, and had been able to marry at thirty the man of her heart. She was a very lucky woman, more fortunate than most—far more fortunate than three parts of those women who make, compulsorily or otherwise, ill-

assorted marriages to begin with. In very few cases indeed does the undesirable husband die, leaving his wife so much money as that, unburdened by any condition as to marrying again; and very seldom indeed does the woman so happily left pick up again in the nick of time her first love, and find him unchanged. It was quite a romantic story, and pleased people: for, however worldly minded we may be, we all like to hear of a fortunate chance like this, and that all is well that ends well, and that the hero and heroine live happy ever after, which was the conclusion in this case.

The first part of Lady Car's history has been written before: but probably the reader remembers nothing of it, and no one would blame him; for it is an old story, and a great many episodes of that human history which we call fiction have been presented to his attention since then. She was tall, of a pliant, willowy figure, soft grey eyes, and an abundance of very soft light-brown hair. Her complexion was pale but clear, and her nose

a trifle, the merest trifle, longer than the majority of noses. This conduced greatly (though I don't deny that it was a defect) to the general impression made by Lady Caroline, who was what is called aristocratic in appearance from the crown of her head to the sole of her foot It was the grand distinction, an air such as some of the humblest-minded and most simple of women often have of that ethereal superiority of race which we all believe in. As a matter of fact, her brother, Lord Rintoul, had a great deal less distinction in his appearance than many a poor clerk. But Lady Car might have been a princess in her own right, and so, to be sure, she was. Unfortunately, I am obliged to describe her to begin with, since it is impossible to bring her forward in her own person until I have told a little of her story. She was amazingly, passionately happy in her second marriage—at first. If she saw any drawbacks she closed her eyes to them, as passionately determined to admit nothing that went against her bliss—but perhaps she

did not see anything. And, after all, there was not much to see. Mr. Beaufort was a gentleman. He was a man of great cultivation of mind, an excellent scholar, understanding every literary allusion that could be made, never at a loss for a happy phrase or quotation, quite an exceptional man in the way of culture and accomplishment. He was extremely good-looking, his manners were admirable, his character without reproach. Nothing seemed wanting in him that a woman could desire. And, notwithstanding the uncomfortable episode of her first marriage, and the two black-browed children, who had not a feature of their mother's, he was Lady Car's only love, and, so far as anybody knows, or as was ever known, she was his. By how many devious ways a pair may be led who are destined to meet at last! He in various wanderings over the world; she, in the blank of her dreadful life, through all her martyrdoms, had all the time been tending to this. And now they were happy at last.

'No,' she said, 'Edward; don't let us settle down; I can't: a house would not contain me. I want the grand air, as the French say. I should be making horrible comparisons, I should be thinking'—she stopped with a shiver—'of the past. Let us go abroad. I have not been abroad since we were parted; it will look like taking up the story where it dropped.'

Beaufort gave a half-conscious glance towards the spot outside where the black-browed children were playing. He felt, perhaps, that it would not be so easy to take up the story where it had dropped; but he assented, with quiet gentleness soothing her. 'I am always fond of wandering. I have done little else all my life—and with you!'

'Yes, with you!' she repeated. She was accustomed to the children, and did not think of the anachronism of their presence at the moment of taking up the story. 'You shall take me to all the new places where you have been alone, and we'll go to the old places

where we were that summer together; we'll go everywhere and see everything, and then when all the novelty is exhausted we shall come back and make a home of our own. And then, Edward, you shall be left free for your work. How we used to talk of it *that* summer! You have not done much to it yet?'

'Nothing at all,' he said, with something like a blush.

'So much the better,' cried Lady Car. 'I should have been jealous had you done it without me—you could not do it without me. You shall not touch a pen while we are away, but observe everything, and investigate mankind in all aspects, and then we'll come home—and then, Edward, what care I shall take that you are not disturbed—how shall I watch and keep off every care! You shall have no trouble about anything, no noises or foolish interruption, no one to disturb you but me. And I will be no interruption.'

'Never, my love,' he said fervently; but

this was the only thing to which he responded clearly. He had not, perhaps, the same intentions about that great work as once he had. He did not see it in the same light; but it gave him a certain pleasure to see her enthusiasm. It surprised him, indeed, that she could be capable of that enthusiasm just as if the story had never dropped. Women, sweet souls! are so strange. There had been nothing in his life so definite as the Torrance marriage and the black-browed children; but yet she was capable of taking up the dropped story just where it had been thrown aside. So far as love went he felt himself capable of that too, but then he had not dropped the love when the story was dropped. Whereas she— In all these records there was something to be got over with a faint uneasiness, to be ignored if possible. He could not return with the same unity of mind as she displayed to the half-forgotten things of the past. But he was sure that her presence would never be any interruption, and he was pleased to fall into her eager, delightful plans,

and to think of wandering with her wherever two people can wander, and when the two people are man and wife that is virtually everywhere. He was very ready for that dream of life.

Besides, if there is anything out of the way in the conditions of a new beginning, it is always a good thing to go abroad. Little anomalies which stand out from the surface of quiet life at home look so much less in the atmosphere of strange places and among the varieties of travel. The best way to forget that there has been once a great gap between two who are to be one, and a lifetime passed by each in surroundings so different, is to go far away and make new joint associations for each which will bridge over that severance. Neither of them gave this reason: she, perhaps, because she was unconscious of it; he, because he had no desire to state the case either to the world or to her—or even to himself. He was, in his way, with the many precautions which he had taken to keep disagreeable subjects at a distance, a genuine

philosopher in the old-fashioned sense of the word.

Accordingly they went abroad, for something more than the longest honeymoon, the black-browed children accompanying them more or less, that is, they performed certain journeys in the wake of the pair, and were settled here and there, at suitable centres, with all the attendance of skilled nurses and governesses which wealth makes it so easy to procure, while Lady Car and her husband pursued their further way, never altogether out of reach. She never forgot she was a mother even in the first rapture of her new happiness. And he was very good to the children. At their early age most children are amusing, and Mr. Beaufort was eminently gentle and kind. His wife's eyes shone when she saw him enter into their little lives as if they had been his own. What a thing for them to have such a man from whom to derive their first ideas of what a man should be! What a thing! She stopped and shuddered when she realised her own meaning; and yet

how true it was—that the instructor they might have had, the example, the warning, the man who was their father, had been taken away, to leave the room open for so much better a teacher, for a perfect example, for one who would be a real father to them! Poor children! Lady Car felt for them something of the conventional pity for the fatherless even in the midst of the swelling of her heart over this great gift that had come to them. Their father indeed!

The years of the honeymoon flew like so many days of happiness. They went almost everywhere where a sea voyage was not indispensable, for Lady Car was a very bad sailor. They avoided everything that could have been troublesome or embarrassing in the conversations, and were quite old married people, thoroughly used to each other, and to all their mutual diversities of feeling and ways of thinking, before they returned home. They were both vaguely aware that the home-coming would be a trying moment, but not enough so to be afraid of it or resist the con-

viction that the time had come when it was no longer possible to put it off. It was before they returned home, however, in the first consultations over their future dwelling, that the first real divergence of opinion arose.

CHAPTER II

'We must think of where we are going to live,' Lady Car said; 'we have never discussed that question. The world is all before us where to choose——'

The boat lay faintly rocking upon the little wavelets from which the ruddy reflection of the sunset was just fading. The beautiful outline of the mountains on the Savoy side stood out blue and half-cold against the glowing west, the Dent du Midi had still a flush of rose colour upon its pinnacles, but had grown white and cold too in the breadth of its great bosom. Evening was coming on, and, though there was still little chill in the air, the sentiment of the September landscape was cold. That suspicion of coming winter which tells the birds so dis-

tinctly that it is time to be gone breathed a hint to-night into human faculties more obtuse. Carry threw her shawl round her with a little shiver which was quite fantastic and unnecessary. She did not really mean that it began to be cold, but only that something had made her think of a fireside.

He was seated in front of her with his oars resting idly in the rowlocks. It was a lovely night, and they were close to their temporary home, within a few minutes of the shore. 'Where we are going to live?' he said. 'Then you don't think of going to your own house.'

She started a little. He would never have found it out had they been on solid ground, but the boat responded to every movement. It was only from this that he knew he had startled her, for she recovered herself immediately, and said, 'Would you like that, Edward?' in a voice which she evidently meant to be as easy as usual, but from which consciousness was not altogether banished.

'Well,' he said, 'my love, it will be the time of year for Scotland, and I suppose there is plenty of game; but I neither like nor dislike, Car. I have not thought about it. I suppose I had taken it for granted that your own house would be the place to which you would go.'

'I never thought of it as my own home,' she said, in a low, hurried tone, which he could scarcely hear. 'Oh, no, no. I could not go there.'

'Well,' he said cheerfully, 'then of course we sha'n't go there. I don't care where we go; wherever you are, there is my home. I had not known one till I had you: it is for you to choose.'

She said nothing more for a time, but leant a little over the side of the boat, putting down her hand into the darkening ripples. 'After all, the lake is as warm as if it were summer still,' she said. It was she who had introduced the subject, but something had blown across her, a breath from the past, which had taken all the pleasure out of it. She shivered a little again, with a contradic-

toriness of which she was unaware. 'There must have been snow somewhere, I think, up among the hills.'

'It is you who are blowing hot and cold, Carry,' he said, smiling at her. 'I think myself it is a perfect evening. Look at the last steamer, passing along against the line of the hills, with its lights, and crammed with tourists from stem to stern. Shall we go in? There's time enough before it gets here, but I know you don't like the wash.'

'I don't like anything that agitates the water, or anything else, perhaps.'

'Not so bad as that; it is I who am most tolerant of the dead level. You like a little agitation, or commotion, or what shall I call it?'

'Do you think so, Edward? No, I love calm; I am most fond of peace, the quiet lake, and the still country, and everything that goes softly.'

'My love,' he said, 'you like what is best always, and the best has always movement in it. You never liked monotony. Let things

go softly, yes, but let them go; whereas I can do very well without movement. I like to lie here and let the water sway us where it pleases; you want me to take the oars and move as we will.'

'Yes,' she said, with a soft laugh, 'perhaps I do. You see through me, but not altogether,' she added, with another hasty movement, betrayed once more by the boat.

'No, not altogether,' he said, with a look which, in the gathering dimness of the twilight, she did not perceive. Besides, his head was turned away, and his mind also. She hoped indeed he did not, he would never divine the almost horror that had sprung up in her at the idea which he had taken so calmly, that of going back to what he called her own house. Her own house! it had never been hers. She thought that she would never go back then to a place full of the old life that was past, thank God! yet never could be quite past so long as her recollection so ached at the thought of it. It seemed to Lady Car that if she went back she

might find that *he* was still there, and that everything that had been since was but a dream.

The night falls faster in these regions than in the lingering North. It was almost dark already, though so short a time since the sun set. The steamer came rustling along, more audible than visible, a bustling shadow against the opal gleam of the water and the cold blue of the hills, with its little bright lights like jewels, and swift progress, throbbing along through the heart of the twilight. Lights began to appear in the windows of the tall houses along the bank. The night was gradually stealing into the vacant place of the day. The steamer came on with a rush of purpose and certain destruction, and roused her from her thoughts to a little nervous tremor. 'I wish you would take the oars, Edward, as you say, and let us go in, please. I know it will do us no harm; but——'

'You are frightened all the same,' he said, leisurely settling to the oars.

'It is like a spirit of evil,' she cried.

He took the boat in, making haste to free her from that little nervous thrill of apprehension, though with a laugh. She was aware that she was fantastic in some things, and that he was aware of it. It was a little imperfection that did no harm. A woman is the better of having these little follies. He felt a fond superiority as he rowed her in with a few strokes, amused at her sense of danger. And it was not till some time later, after they had climbed a somewhat rugged path to their villa among the trees, and had looked into the room where little Janet lay fast asleep, and then had supped cheerfully at a table close to the broad window, that the subject was resumed. By this time all the noises were stilled, a full moon was rising slowly, preparing to march along the sky in full majesty in the midst of the silent tranquillity of the night; there was not a breath of air stirring, not a cloud upon the blue heavens, which were already almost as clear as day by the mere resplendence of her coming over the solid mountains, with their many peaks, which

'stepped along the deep.' The steamer had rustled away to its resting-place, wherever that was. The tourists had found shelter in the hotels, which shone with their many lights along the edge of the lake. These big caravansaries were unseen from the villa, all that was noisy and common was out of sight; the lake all still, not a boat out, with a silver line of ripples making a straight but broken line across the large glimmer of its surface; the dark hills opposite, with a silver touch here and there, and the great open-eyed, abundant moon above looking down upon them, they and she the only things living in that wonderful space which was all beauty and calm. They sat looking out for some time without saying anything. Such a night is in itself a sort of ecstasy, especially to those who want nothing, and with whom, as with the whole apparent world stretched out before them, all is well.

'And to think we shall have to leave all this presently and enter into the fret and care of settling down!' he said, with a half-laugh.

'I interrupted you, dear, to-night when you were talking of that. I suppose it was I that diverted your thoughts. Since it is not to be your Towers, where is it to be?'

'Not my Towers,' she said, with a little half-reproachful look at him and a sudden clasping together of her lightly interlaced fingers.

'Well, let us say Tom's Towers; but in present circumstances it is very much the same.'

Once more a little shiver ran over her, though there was no chill at all in the soft air that came in from the lake and the moonlight. But her voice was a little uncertain with it, as if her teeth had chattered. 'Don't talk of it,' she said; 'I want no Towers. I want not a *place* at all, or any quarters, but a house, a pretty house, just big enough for us and them, somewhere, wherever you would like, Edward.'

'I shall like what you like,' he said.

'But that is not what I wish at all; I want you to tell me what will please *you*. You would like to be within reach of the great

libraries, within reach of what is going on. No one can write what is to live without being within reach——'

He shook his head. 'You are too partial in your estimate of what I am likely to do; so long as I am within reach of you—and thank God nothing can put me out of that!—I don't know that I care for anything more.'

'That is what I should say, Edward,' she said, with some vehemence, 'not you. Do you think I am such a silly woman as to wish you to be entirely occupied with me? No, no; that is the woman's part.'

'Well,' he said, with his usual soft laugh, 'mine is the feminine *rôle*, you know, to a great extent. Fortunately, my disposition quite chimes in with it.'

'What do you mean by the feminine *rôle*?'

'My love, I don't mean anything. I mean that life was too many for me when you and I were parted. I was the divided half, don't you know, "of such a friendship as had mastered time." Being sundered from my

mate, time mastered me: I took to floating, as you don't like to do, even on the lake.'

'Edward,' she cried, 'if anything could make it more dreadful to me to think of that time, it would be hearing you speak so.'

'Don't,' he said, 'there is no occasion; after all, neither time nor anything else masters one if it is not in one's nature. You think too well of me, Carry. Some people are made to float.'

'And what was I then?' she said. 'I was swept away. I could not resist the force against me. It was worse for me, oh! far worse, Edward, than for you. I was caught by the torrent: there was no floating in my case. Perhaps you will say I was made to be carried away.'

'My darling,' he said, 'that's all over and past. Don't let us think of what is done with. Here we are now, two people, not very old, quite able to enjoy all the good things of this life, and who have got them, thank Heaven! in a large share. What would you and I have attained with all the fighting possible, com-

pared to the happiness of being together, having each other's constant company? And we have got that, with many pretty things besides,' he added, with his gentle laugh.

Lady Car felt the words like a flood pouring to her lips, but she was silent; how could she speak? Did it never occur to him how these pretty things were attained—how it was that he and she sat out here by this window looking out upon Lake Leman and the moonlight in circumstances such as only rich people can secure, both of them to start with being so poor—how it was that they had been able to wander about together, a pair of lovers, for years, with all the accessories of happiness as well as the happiness itself? She clasped her slight fingers together till the pressure hurt; but she said nothing, having nothing—having far too much to say. Such thoughts had glanced across her mind before, faintly, for a moment. She could not have told why they had become so much more vivid now. It was, no doubt, because of the change which was about to take place in their life, the giving

up of the wandering, the settling down. Her thoughts carried her away altogether as she sat gazing out with vacant eyes at the lake and the moonlight, forgetting where she was and that she had an answer to make to the question addressed to her. At last her husband's gentle voice, so refined and soft, startled her back to the reality of the moment.

'You don't say anything, Carry. If I were of a jealous temper I might ask whether, perhaps, you were beginning to doubt? but I don't, I don't, my love; you need not defend yourself. We both know that is the best that life could give us, and it has come to us almost without an effort. Isn't it so? For my part, I've got all I want, and the rest of the circumstances are indifferent to me—where we live or what we do—you in my house and my home—and my occupation—and my content. I want no more.'

Could anything be said more sweet to a woman? According to all the conventionalities, no—according to many of the most natural feelings, no. What could be better

than each other's constant society, to be together always, to share everything, to own no thought that was not within the charmed circle of their happiness? As he said these words slowly, with little pauses between, she took in all the sweetness of them, with a commentary in her mind that was not sweet, an impatience which scarcely could be controlled, a blank sensation as of impossibility which held back the impatience. Was there not something more to be said—something more?

Mr. Beaufort had lit his cigarette, which was so habitual to him, so completely the breath of his reflective leisure and gentleness and calm, that the most sensitive of women could not have objected to it; nothing so aggressive as a cigar ever touched his lips, as little as any lady could he tolerate a pipe. The little curl of blue smoke, the pungent but aromatic odour, the very attitude of the shapely hand holding it, were characteristic. The smoke curled softly upwards from his soft brown beard and moustache. He was a very handsome man, handsomer in his way

than Carry, whose nose was a trifle too long and her mobile lips a trifle too thin. She was, indeed, a little too thin altogether, whereas he was perfect in the fullness of his manhood, just over forty, but as young and strong as, and enjoying his youth and strength more than, at twenty-five. She looked at him and was silent. Is not a man better than a woman at that age above all? Is not he more likely to have discovered the real secret of life? Was not he better able to judge than Carry, a creature who had never been wise, who had been hurried, passive, through so many horrors, and dragged out of a tragedy of awful life, to be landed at last on this pleasant shore? Surely, seeing it must be so, her troubled mind made a wild circle from the point where they had parted until this, when they were one, and for a moment, in the dimness behind his chair, it seemed to Lady Car that she saw a spectre rise. She almost thought a shadowy face looked at her over Beaufort's head—a face black-browed, with big, light, fiery eyes, burning as she had

often seen them burn—the same eyes that were closed in sleep in little Janet's crib—the same that sometimes gloomed out from her little boy's dark countenance. Her faithful recollection made his picture on the air while Beaufort took dainty puffs of his cigarette. He had no such ghost to daunt him, his memory was pure and calm, while hers was filled with that dreadful shadow, and with reason, for without that shadow this happiness could never have been. What a thought for a woman—what a thought! and to think that it should never once cross the imagination of the man who was enjoying all the other had lost—all and so much more, and that but for the other this happiness could never have been!

These thoughts came like a wave over Carry while she sat with her fingers clasped tight, arrested, dumb, incapable of any reply. What a blessed thing that even one's nearest and dearest cannot divine the quick thoughts that come and go, the visions that flash across us, while we sit by their side and reveal

nothing! If Beaufort could have seen that black-browed spectre, and realised all that Torrance had brought for him, would he have maintained that attitude of thoughtful leisure, that calm of assured satisfaction and happiness? To be sure he did know; there was no secret in it; everybody knew. There was nothing wrong, no guilt, nothing to blush for. The shame was all fanciful, as was that sense of her husband's strange obtuseness and want of perception which had seized upon Carry, as if they had been horrible things, when they were quite innocent, natural things, which she ought to have most desired for him. It was curious, too, to think that between two people who loved each other so, who were so entirely in sympathy, one could be so unimpressed by the feelings of the other; that the air should be so full for her of ghosts, of passion, and misery past, of the strange, horrible thought that it was by those passions and miseries that she had purchased both for him and herself this calm, and yet that he should divine nothing, but think it only a light ques-

tion of locality, of where to settle down, of a desirable neighbourhood! Apparently the lightness of the decision they had to make, its entirely unimportant character, struck him as he lay back in his chair with his face towards the lake and the moonlight, and the faint blue curl of fragrant smoke rising in the air. 'I'll tell you what we'll do,' he said suddenly, with a laugh, 'to facilitate this tremendous decision. We'll take a succession of houses in different places, and find out by experiment which we like best.'

She brought herself back to the triviality of the discussion with a gasp, as if she had fallen, and with a great effort to dismiss those other thoughts. 'But that would be no better than travelling,' she said, 'of which I am a little tired. I want a home of my own, a house which belongs to no one else,' she added, with a slight shiver, 'but you and me, Edward, no ghosts of other people in it.'

'Do you call their little pictures ghosts?' he said, looking round at the dim walls, which were hung with portraits of the Swiss family

to whom the villa belonged; 'not lovely ones certainly, but quite innocent. Then, Carry my love, do just as you please. I shall come with you, like Tom and Janet, to see the new place. If you choose one that's very ugly and out of the way, we will all protest. But, so far as I am concerned, it can't be ugly while you are there,' he said, putting his hands upon hers with a tender pressure. Then added, with a look of solicitude, putting away the cigarette, 'Why, you are in a fever, Carry. Your poor little hands are like fire. I hope you haven't taken cold on the lake.'

'I never take cold,' she said, smiling. 'I suppose it is mere silliness, thinking that this time is over, and that we are going back to the world.'

'If that vexes you, my darling, don't let us go back to the world.'

'Edward, you make me wild, you are so indifferent! You speak as if nothing mattered, as if we could go on and just please ourselves and think of nothing else for ever.'

'Well, my love, I tell you nothing matters

to me except yourself, and I don't think the world would mind much. But don't be vexed, Carry. I know the boy must go to school and all the rest of it. We'll do our duty like men—I mean like women, which is far more thorough. And, for my part, I'm not a bit afraid of the world. Even London I can face quite tranquilly with you by my side, especially as at this time of the year there's nobody there.'

'Oh, Edward!' she said, with a tender exasperation; 'it is very soothing to be everything in the world to the man you love; and yet——'

CHAPTER III

THEY all came home, as people say—though it was no home to which they were coming, and they had been very much at home in their Swiss villa, notwithstanding the portraits of the Swiss owners of the place on all the walls. It is very delightful after a long absence to come home when that familiar place is open and waiting for you, and the children run about the rooms in a tumult of joy, recognising everything, and you settle into your old chair, in your old corner, as if you had never been away. It is quite a different thing when a family comes home to settle down. Looking for a house is apt to be a weary operation, and a small house in London in autumn, in the meantime, is not very gay. But, on the other hand, in October London is not the

dismal place it often appears to the stranger: there are still days of bright and sunny weather; the brown grass in the parks has begun to recover itself a little, the trees grow red and yellow, and lend a little light of their own to supplement the skies. Though St. James's Park is rarely more than in monotone, like a drawing in sepia, the wider breadths between the Marble Arch and Hyde Park Corner are brighter, and there is a little stir in the air of people coming back. It was rather a depressed and downcast family party that arrived after a brief but rough crossing of the Channel and all the wear and tear of the journey—Lady Car very pale, with lines on her forehead that showed all the freshly awakened anxiety with which the sight of her native country, involving, as it did, the renewing of many responsibilities and of life in its commonplace aspect after a long holiday, had filled her; little Janet, very fretful and tired, almost paler than her mother, with her black brow and black hair, and big blue lips accentuating the whiteness of her face; Tom, dis-

tracted with the confinement and the impossibility of any play or commotion beyond that which could be carried on within the limited space of a railway carriage, exasperated and exasperating; and an attendant group of tired maids, rendered half frantic by his pranks and the impossibility of keeping him in order. Mr. Beaufort had an immense superiority amid this group. He had not turned a hair, the rough crossing had no effect upon him. He was very kind to little Janet, who had succumbed, and was quietly miserable, lying on a bench, and he took the tenderest care of his wife, who never at the worst moment lost her air of distinction or was humbled to a common level even by the waves of the Channel. His tall figure, in a long ulster, with his fine brown beard blowing a little in the wind, his cigarette always giving forth a curl of dainty smoke, was a comfort to see, even at a distance, facing the breeze at the other end of the ship. Tom, who would not be kept down, clung to his stepfather, whom on other occasions he showed no great love for, trotting after him, standing

in his shelter, with little legs set well apart, and now and then a clutch at the ulster to steady himself, characteristically selecting the most sturdy member of the party to hold by. When the party tumbled into the hotel in the winterly evening, half dazed with fatigue, Beaufort was still the master of the situation. He was quite fresh and self-possessed. Coming back to England, which oppressed Lady Car with so many thoughts, did not affect him any more than crossing to Paris, or to Vienna, or to any other capital. The fact of beginning a new chapter of existence did not affect him. He felt it, indeed, to be no new chapter of existence, only a continuance of the former. He was pleased enough to arrive, not sorry to end the wandering, glad enough to settle down. It meant rather rest to him than any excitement of a new beginning. He was half amused at and altogether indulgent and tolerant of Carry's fancy about not going to her own house. It was, perhaps, a little absurd, for Scotland, of course, was the right place to go to at this time of the year; and to look for a

new house in a new place, when a house that belongs to you, in the most eligible position, is standing vacant, was, no doubt, a strange caprice. But if that was how she felt, far should it be from him to cross her. He was not a great sportsman. A day or two's shooting, even a week or two, perhaps, could not harm any man, but he did not very much care if he never touched a gun. Still it was so obvious that it was the natural place to go to. He smiled to himself as he walked to the club after dinner, taking himself off that she might get to bed, to the rest she wanted so much, at this caprice of hers. Dear Carry, if it had been a much greater matter, so far as he was concerned, she should have her way; but he allowed to himself, with a smile, that it was a little silly. When you have been married for a time you are able to allow this without any derogation to your divinity. He admired and loved her as much as a man could do, but it was a pleasure to feel that a little indulgence had to be exercised, to mingle now and then with his chivalrous reverence and love. He

would do nothing to cross her. She should get her house where she pleased, furnish it—with some aid from his own taste—how she pleased, and be happy as she would. He smiled as he walked along the familiar streets; it was a pleasure to be in London again. It was a pleasure to be so well off, he who had often been poorly enough off, doubtful sometimes whether he could afford to order his dinner at the club. All that was over now, and he had no objection to owe it to his wife. What did it matter which of them had the money? Had he possessed it, how gladly would he have spent it upon Carry, to give her everything that heart could desire! This is, when one comes to think of it, the real generosity, the most noble way of taking such a matter. To think that it was not Carry's money, but the money of Torrance, that made everything so comfortable for them, happily did not dwell in his mind as it did in hers. He did not even think of it—it was so of course, and of course she had purchased this competence which she shared with her second

husband by being an excellent wife to the previous husband, and winning his trust and confidence. Mr. Beaufort luckily did not feel that there was any reason for dwelling upon that side of the question.

Next morning the whole party was revived and cheerful. The children, when they burst into the room, after a long enforced waiting in the temporary nursery which looked to the back, and from which they saw nothing but chimneys and the backs of other houses, rushed to the large window of the room in which Lady Car was breakfasting, with a scream of pleasure. To look out upon the busy road full of carriages and people, and the trees and space of Hyde Park beyond, delighted them. Little Tom stood smacking the whip which was his perpetual accompaniment, and making ejaculations. 'Oh, I say! What lots and lots of people! There's a pony! but he can't ride a bit, that fellow on it. Where's he going to ride? What's inside those gates? is it a palace or is it a park, or what is it? I say, Beau!—what a

liar he is, Jan! he said there was nobody in London—and there's millions!'

'Tom,' said Lady Car; 'if you say such things you will be sent away.'

'Let him talk,' said Beaufort; 'he is quite right from his point of view. You must remember, Tom, that, though you're a clever fellow, you don't know everything; and there may be millions of people in London though there's nobody.'

They both turned upon him incredulous faces, with that cynicism of childhood which is as remarkable as its trust, overawed by a sense of his superior knowledge, yet quite unconvinced of his good faith. Their faces were very like each other—rather large and without colour, their eyebrows shaggy and projecting, their large round eyes *à fleur de tête*. Janet's little red mouth, which was her pretty feature, was open with suspicion and wonder. Tom's bore an expression of half-assumed scorn. He was a little afraid of 'Beau,' and had an alarmed belief in him, at

the bottom of much doubt of his meaning and resistance generally.

'You seem to have a great budget of correspondence this morning, Car.'

'From the house-agents; there seem to be houses to be had everywhere. Instead of any difficulty in finding one, we shall only be troubled where to choose. What do you say to Richmond? the river is so lovely, and the park so delightful for the children, and——'

'If Tom is going to school, as I suppose he is, there will only be one child to consider, and little Jan is not *difficile*.'

'Am I going to school, mother?' Tom faced round again suddenly from the window and stood against the light with his legs apart, a very square, solid little form to reckon with.

'You must, my dear boy; your education has been kept back so long. To be sure, he knows French,' said Carry, with a wistful look at her husband, seeking approval, 'which so few boys of his age do.' Mr. Beaufort had

considered that it would be advantageous for Tom to be at school before now.

'I don't mind,' said the boy. 'I like it. I want to go. I hated all those French fellows—but they're different here.'

'The first thing they will ask you at Eton is whether you will take a licking,' said Beaufort; 'that was how it was in my day.'

'I won't,' cried Tom; 'not if it was the biggest fellow in the school. Did you, Beau?'

'I can't remember, it's so long ago,' said the stepfather. 'No, not Richmond, if you please, Car; it's pretty, but it's cockney. Sunday excursions spoil all the places about London.'

'Windsor? One would still have the river within reach, and rides in the forest without end.'

'Windsor still less, Carry my love. It's a show place. Royal persons always coming and going, and crowds to stare at them. If you love me, no.'

'That's a large argument, Edward. We should not live in the town, of course, and to

see the Queen driving about would always be a little excitement.'

'Does she drive in a big umbrella like the gentlemen upon the omnibus?' said Janet, whose eyes had been caught by that wonder. Tom had seen it too, and was full of curiosity, but kept his eye upon Beaufort to see whether he would laugh at the question.

'Much grander, with gold fringe and a little royal standard flying from the top,' said Beaufort gravely. 'You know the Doge at Venice always had an umbrella, and other great princes.'

Tom stared very steadily, with his big, round eyes, to watch for the suspicion of a smile, but, seeing none, ventured, with a little suppressed doubt and defiance of the possibly 'humbugging' answer, 'Who are the men on the omnibuses? They can't all be princes; they're just like *cochers*,' cried Tom.

'Don't you trust to appearances, my boy. Did you never hear that the greatest swells drove mail coaches? Not Windsor, Car, not Windsor.'

'Surrey, Edward? Guildford, Haslemere, Dorking—somewhere in that direction?'

'At Dorking we should be in the way of the battle, Tom.'

'I should like that,' cried the boy; 'and I suppose *you* can fire a gun, Beau,' he added, after a moment's hesitation, scrutinising his stepfather closely, glad to have the chance of one insult, but something afraid of the response.

'Tom!' cried his mother, in a warning tone.

'More or less,' said Beaufort languidly; 'enough to hit a Dutchman if there was one before me—you know they're very broad. At Guildford people are buried on the top of a hill for the sake of the view. Yes, I think Surrey would do.'

'Am I to go to Eton straight off, mother—is that in Surrey? I want to go a good long way off. I don't want to be near home. You would be coming to see me, and Jan, and kiss me, and call me "Tom," and make the other fellows laugh.'

'What should you be called but Tom?' said Lady Car, with a smile.

'Torrance!' cried the child with pride, as who should say Plantagenet. She had been looking at him, smiling, but at this utterance of the boy Lady Car started and turned burning red, then coldly pale. Why should she? Nothing could be more fantastic, more absurd, than the feeling. She had done no harm in making a second marriage, in which she had found happiness, after the first one, which had brought nothing but misery. She had offended against no law, written or unwritten. She had wiped out Torrance and his memory, and all belonging to him (except his money), for years. Why should the name which she had once borne, which was undeniably her son's name, affect her so deeply now? The smile became fixed about the corner of her mouth, but the boy, of course, understood nothing of what was passing in his mother's mind, though he stared at her a little as if he did, increasing her confusion. 'The fellows never call a fellow by his christened name,'

said Tom, great in the superiority of what he had learned from various schoolboys on their travels. These were things, he was aware, which of course women didn't know.

'You'd better come and have a stroll with me, Master Tom,' said Beaufort. 'I'll show you Piccadilly, which is always something; as for the park, you wouldn't care for it: there are no riders in the Row now. You see, as I told you, there's nobody in London. Come, get your hat, quickly.'

'Me too,' said little Janet, with a pout of her small mouth.

'Not any ladies to-day, only two fellows, as Tom says, taking a stroll together.'

'In a moment, Beau!' cried Tom, delighted, rushing to get his hat. 'I told you, Jan, old Beau's a gentleman—sometimes,' the boy added, as his sister ran after him to see what arrangements of her own she could make to the same end.

'You are very good to them, Edward—oh! very good. How can I ever thank you?' said Lady Car, with tears in her eyes. Her

nerves had been a little shaken by that shock, and by the vain perception that stole over her of two parties in the family, two that would become more distinctly two by the progress of years, unlike in nature and constitution, and even in name. It is not necessary to insist upon the family name of children travelling with their mother. No one had been much the wiser during these years of wandering. But Tom's 'Torrance!' was a revelation, and opened before her possibilities unknown.

'Good, am I? That's all right, that's something to the credit side, but I was not aware of it,' said Beaufort, in his easy way; 'all the same,' he added, laughing, 'Master Tom will want looking after if we are to make anything of him. He will want a tight hand, which, I fear, does not belong either to you or me.'

It cost Lady Car a pang to hear even this mild expression of opinion about her boy. A mother says many things, and feels many things, about her children which no one else

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may say before her. She looked at him wistfully, with a faint smile, which was full of pain. 'He is only a child,' she said, apologetically, 'and then he will get that at school.' She could not contradict him, and she could not argue with him. Poor little Tom! he was her own, though he might not be all she wished him to be—the plea rose to her lips unconsciously that he was fatherless, that he had drawbacks to contend against, poor child. What a plea to form even unconsciously in her mind! She looked at her husband with such a troubled and wistful appeal that his heart smote him. He laid his hand upon her head caressingly, and stooped to kiss her.

'To be sure,' he said; 'the boy will be all right, Car. He has plenty of spirit, and that is the best thing, after all. Ready, Tom? Come along, then. I'm ready too.'

Lady Car followed him with her wistful eyes. They were not full of admiring delight, as when a mother watches her children going out with their father, proud of both him and them, and of their love for each other. What

it must be to have a life without complications, full of unity, in which a woman can feel like that! Carry longed to whisper in her child's ear, to bid him, oh! to be good, to mind what Beau said to him, to behave like a gentleman to one who was so kind—so kind! But she had to let him go without that warning, fearing that he would be disrespectful, and come back in disgrace, though Edward was so gentle with him, and never complained, except to say that he would want a tight hand. How well she knew that he wanted a tight hand! and how certain she was that it was not from her he would get that needful restraint! And from whom, then? At school, from some master who would know nothing about him, nor give him credit for the complications in his lot, his having no father. Perhaps, she said to herself in her troubled thoughts, it is better for a boy to have any kind of a father than no father at all. His father would have flogged him, had no mercy upon him, taught him to swear and swagger, and ride wild horses, and run wild about the country.

Would that have been better? She stopped. with a shudder, unable to pursue the question. Better—oh heavens! But for her what would it have been? She turned to meet little Janet's large eyes fixed upon her, and started with alarm and a kind of horror. It seemed to her that the child must have read her thoughts.

'Are you cold, mozer?' Janet said. Though she was eight, she had still difficulties with the 'th,' difficulties perhaps rather of a foreigner than a child.

'No, dear,' said Lady Car, again shuddering, but smiling upon the little girl. 'It is not at all cold.'

'Mozer, take me out with you, since Tom has gone with Beau. I don't want to go out with nurse. I want to be wiz you.'

'Dear,' said Carry, wooing her little daughter for a favourable reply with soft caresses, 'isn't Beau kind to Tom? Don't you love Beau?'

The child searched her face, as children do, in an unconscious but penetrating search

for motives unknown. Janet saw that her mother was wistful and unassured, though she did not probably know how to name these motives. 'I do well enough,' she said. 'I don't think of him. Mozer, take me out with you.'

And this was all that could be got out of Janet. The black brow and the dark hair made her look so much more resolute and determined than usual that poor Carry was almost afraid of her little girl, and believed that she hid beneath that careless answer thoughts and feelings which were quite determined and well-assured.

CHAPTER IV

THE house was found after a great many not unpleasurable researches — little expeditions, now and then, which Lady Caroline and her husband took together, with reminiscences of their first honeymoon travels, which had been so sweet. She forgot, as a woman is so ready to do, all the little deceptions and disappointments of the intervening years, and when they found at last the very thing they wanted the elation and exhilaration of a new beginning entered fully into Carry's mind. If Edward had shown himself too contented with his life, too little ambitious, too indifferent to any stimulant, there was something in the fact of being unsettled, of having no certain motive of his life, of moving about constantly from

one place to another, which would very well account for that. But when he was no longer subject to interruption, when his time and his thoughts were free, who could doubt that a new spring of energy would burst forth? In the old days, when they had first met, he had been full of projects. Was not that one of the charms that had caught her girlish heart? He had so fully meant to make himself a great influence in the world, to help to sway the course of events, to make the world a better place. They had talked of that before even they talked of love—and her enthusiasm had been roused and fired by his. He had told her—how well she remembered!—that it was a mistake of dull minds to think that it was hard to obtain an influence upon one's fellow-men. On the contrary, if you are but in earnest—in such earnest that none could mistake your sincerity and true feeling—then the response, especially of the young, especially of the working people, whom it was of so much importance to influence for good, was most ready, almost immediate. So he said,

discoursing for hours as they wandered about the Swiss valley in which they had met, Carry Lindores all in a flame of enthusiastic listening, responding with her whole heart. What a beautiful lot it had seemed to her to share this work and this life of this new crusader, this chief of men! She was not Lady Caroline then, but a poor little girl in a faded frock, her father far out of the succession, and no grandeur of rank or anything else surrounding the wandering family. Carry's imagination went back to that moment with a leap, ignoring, oh so thankfully! all that had gone between. She had hardly done much with her unfaithfulness to congeal her Edward's enthusiasm, to turn him from his hopefulness to misanthropy and pessimism. He had fallen into apathy because he had been forsaken and unhappy. But now everything was to begin anew—a settled home on English ground, a position of his own in which his leisure and his peace should be undisturbed and his mind free to throw itself into the old studies. Who could doubt that with all this his energy

and his enthusiasm would come back to him again?

The house was near one of the charming little towns of Surrey. It was on the slope of a hill, a house partly antique for beauty, and with a new part built on behind, happily out of sight, for comfort. A wide landscape of breezy undulations stretched before the windows; the town, upon another low hill, all its red roofs picturesquely outlined among the trees, stood out a charming object in the view, not near enough to add any association of noise or gossip. The very railway ran in a cutting, invisible, though near enough to be exceedingly convenient, nothing but a puff of steam showing now and then over the trees. The landscape embraced, as it were, two worlds—heather and fir trees on one side, luxuriant English cornfields, woods, and villages on the other. The altitude of their hillside was not great, but as there was nothing greater about it, it might have been Mont Blanc for the feeling of wide atmosphere and sky; yet they were within a mile or two of

the little country town, and within an hour and a half of London! What could be more delightful, combining every advantage? Carry had all the delight of a bride in furnishing her house—nay, of a bridegroom too, for one of her chief cares was to fit up a study for Beaufort, in which every taste should be satisfied. Though she was by nature so gentle and yielding a woman, she it was who was the purveyor of everything, who had the purse in her hands. The only thing upon which Beaufort had made a stand at the time of his marriage was this—that the money which was hers should remain with her, that he should have nothing to do with its expenditure. He had his own little income, which was very small, yet sufficed for his personal wants. He lived a fairy life, without any necessity for money, his house kept for him, his living all arranged, everything that he wanted or could desire coming without a thought; but he preserved his feeling of independence by having nothing to do with the expenditure. Thus Carry combined everything in her own person,

the bride and the bridegroom—even something of the mother. Her drawing-room was fitted up according to all the new lights. She had weaknesses towards the æsthetic, and something of the delicacy of those heroines of Mr. Du Maurier whose *bibelots* are their religion, and who cannot be happy in a room which has curtains not of the right tint. But even the anxiety to secure everything right in the drawing-room was secondary to her anxiety about the library, which was to be Beaufort's room, the future centre of all his occupations. He had himself a number of books laid up in various stores, and they had bought a number more in their wanderings—fine old examples in delicate old vellum like ivory and luxurious editions. Carry was occupied for weeks in arranging them, in procuring the right kind of bookcases, and hanging and decorating the room in just the subdued beauty which is appropriate for a place of study. There was one great window commanding the finest view, there was another looking into a sunny nook of the garden. The

writing table stood within reach of the fire, and near that sunny window, so that it might always command both warmth and light. The chairs were few, but luxurious to sit in, and moving at a touch, without noise, upon the deep, mossy softness of the carpet. The book-cases were inlaid and exquisite with lines of delicate sculpture and gilding between the shelves, out of which the mellow gold of the old bindings and the sober background of Russia leather and the tempered ivory of the vellum showed like a picture. He had not even seen it till it was completed. No lover ever spent upon his lady's boudoir more tender care and delicate fancy than Carry lavished upon her husband's study. When they went down finally to take possession of Easton Manor there were various things incomplete in the rest of the house, but this was perfect. She took him by the arm and led him to the door. 'This is my present to you, Edward,' she said, a little breathless with happiness and anxiety to know if it would please him. At this period when furniture is supposed to make so great

a part of our comfort, the moment was intense—would it please him, after all?

It did please him, or, at least, he graciously declared it did, with an enthusiasm perhaps a little strained, but Carry, who was half crying with joy and pleasure, never found this out, if, indeed, there was anything to find out. She ran about the room, pointing out everything—all the details of the arrangements, the drawers for papers, the portfolios for prints, the shelves that could be filled at pleasure, the space that still was vacant to be filled up. Everything that heart could desire was in this dilettante shrine. There was a little picture on the mantelpiece, an original, a lovely little Fra Angelico, in the daintiest of carved shrines, which good luck had thrown in their way in Italy—a gem for an emperor's closet. He gave a little cry when he saw this. 'Carry, your own picture—the one you love best!'

'I shall love it better here than anywhere else,' said Carry, falling a-weeping and a-laughing with a joy that was not hysterical,

but only driven to the bounds of all things to find expression. She was so happy! She had never in all her life been so happy before. In her own house, her own home, all hers and his, the sanctuary of their joint life to come. When a woman comes to this climax of happiness, she generally does so more thoroughly with her *arrière-pensée* than a man. Only one thing could have made Carry's bliss more exquisite—if he had done it for her—and yet, on the whole, I am not sure that to have done it for him was not a higher pleasure still. Little Janet had held by her mother's dress coming into the new, strange house, and thus had been swept into this rapture without intention, and stood gazing at it with great eyes, half wondering, half critical. What there was to cry about Janet did not know. She was a spectator, though she was only a child, and broke the spell. Lady Car felt more than Beaufort did what the interruption was. And thus the edge was a little taken off her delight. But in the evening, when Janet was happily in bed, she led her husband

back to his beautiful room. He would rather, perhaps, as a matter of fact, have remained in the uncompleted drawing-room with her. A thing which is incomplete has a charm of its own. He was suggesting various things which were needed to fill up, and enjoying the occupation. He had even made a few rough sketches, rough, yet full of 'feeling,' showing with only a line or two how many improvements could still be made. She was delighted by the suggestions, but a little impatient, longing to make sure that he had seen all the many luxuries provided for himself. She took his arm when he had shown her where he would place the little fantastic Venetian *étagère*. 'Yes, Edward; but I don't want to stay here any longer: I want to spend the first evening in the library, in your own room.'

'In the library,' he said with a slight vexation; then recovering himself he followed her impulse with the best grace in the world. Poor Carry! it would ill become him not to humour her. 'But is there a lamp there?' he said. She laughed for pleasure at the question.

A lamp! There was the most beautiful arrangement of lights which the art of that period had yet devised. The reign of the electric light had not begun, but candles with every kind of silvery shading that had been then invented were round the walls, and the light was so soft, so equable, so diffused, that no electric lighting could have been more perfect. 'You who are so fond of light, how could you think I would forget that?' she said.

'You never forget anything: you are my good angel,' he said, holding her in his arms: the perfect tenderness and the perfect taste went to his heart. 'You are too good to me —and all this is far too good for a useless fellow who never did anything.'

'It is the circumstances that are to blame for that,' she said, vaguely. 'You have never had the leisure and the ease that is necessary for great work.'

He laughed a little, and perhaps coloured too, could she have seen it in the flattering soft glow of the shaded light. 'I am afraid,'

he said, 'that a man who is overcome by circumstances is rather a poor sort of creature; but we won't enter into that.'

'No, indeed,' she said; 'there is no such question before the house, Edward. Now sit down in your own chair and let us talk. How many talks we are to have here! This is the place where we shall discuss everything, and you will tell me how your thoughts are taking shape, and read me a page here and there, and here I'll bring my little troubles to be calmed down, but never to interrupt anything, you may trust me for that.'

'My love,' he cried, 'I trust you for everything; but, Carry, I am sadly afraid you are preparing disappointment for yourself. I am by no means sure that I could write anything were I to try; and as for plans——'

'Don't say that, Edward. Don't you remember how we used to talk in the dark old Kander Thal long ago? You had planned it out all so clearly. I think *I* could write down the plan, and even the names of the chapters, if you have forgotten. But I am sure you

have not forgotten. It has only been suspended for want of time—for want of the books you needed—for want—oh! if I might flatter myself so far?—for want, perhaps, of me; but that's the vainest thing to say.'

'It is the only truth in the whole matter,' he said—'for want of you! I think I must have invented that plan on the spot to please you.'

'Hush, hush!' said Carry, putting up her hand to his mouth. 'Don't blaspheme. You were full of it, it was a new world to me. First to think that I *knew* a man with such great things in his mind, then that he would talk to me about it, then that my enthusiasm helped him on a little, that he looked to me for sympathy. Edward,' she said, with a little nervous laugh, changing colour, and casting down her eyes, 'I wrote some little verses about it in the old days, but never finished them, and this morning I found them, and scribbled a little more.'

'My love, my love!' he cried, in a troubled tone, in which love, shame, compunction, and

even a far-off trembling of ridicule had place. What could he say to this? The romance, the sentiment, the good faith, the enthusiasm, altogether overwhelmed him. He could have laughed, he could have wept, he did not know what to say. How he despised himself for being so much below her expectations, for being, as he said himself, such a poor creature! He changed colour; her moist eyes, her little verses filled him with shame and penitence, yet a rueful amusement too. The verses were very pretty: he did not despise them, it was only himself whom he despised.

'My darling, that's so long ago! I was a fool, puffed up by your enthusiasm and by seeing that you believed in me. A young man, don't you know, is always something of an actor when he begins to see that a girl has faith in him. It is—how long, Carry?—fifteen years ago?'

'And what of that?' she said. 'If I could pick up my little thread, as I tell you, how much more easily could you pick up your great one? This was why I wanted to

be within reach of London, within reach of the great libraries. It is quite easy to run up for the day to refer to anything you want—indeed, I might do it for you if you were very busy. And I can see that you have no interruptions, Edward. We must settle our hours and everything from that point of view.'

He felt himself at liberty to laugh as she came down to this more familiar ground. 'I fear,' he said, 'all my plans were in the air—they never came to execution of any kind. I don't know even, as I told you, whether I can write *at all*.'

'Edward!' she cried, in an indignant tone.

'Well, my love'—the flattery went to his heart, notwithstanding all he knew against it—'that is the easiest of the matter to be sure; but everybody can write nowadays, and why should the world listen to me more than another? Besides, my favourite questions of social economy, as against political, have all been *exploités* by other hands since then.'

'Not by other hands so capable as yours.'

'Oh, Carry!' he cried, with a laugh in which there was pleasure as well as a little ridicule; 'I fear you have a quite unwarrantable confidence in me; I am only——'

'Hush!' she said, again putting up her hand to his mouth; 'I don't want to hear your opinion of yourself. I am a better judge than you are on that point. Besides, let us hear who have written on that question?' She sat quite upright in her chair. 'Bring them forward, and let them be judged,' she said.

'I cannot bring forth a whole school of writers before your tribunal, my lady. Well,' he said, laughing, 'there's Ruskin for one—who has said all I once wanted to say, in an incomparable way, and gone a great deal further than I could go.'

'Ah!' she cried; 'that is just the whole matter. Mr. Ruskin is incomparable, as you say, but he goes a great deal too far. He is a poet. People adore him, but don't put serious faith in him. Mr. Ruskin has nothing to do with it, Edward: he could not forestall *you*.'

'No, no more than the sun could forestall a farthing candle. Carry, my dear, don't make me blush for myself. Come,' he added, 'let me see the little verses—for the moment that is more to the point. Perhaps when you have showed me how you have picked up your threads I may see how to pick up mine.'

'Should you really like to see them, Edward? They are nothing: they are very little verses indeed. I have left them in my writing-book.'

'Get them, then,' he said, opening the door for her, with a smile. Poor Lady Car! She raised a happy face to him as she passed, with eyes glistening, still a little moist, very bright, full of sweetness and gentle agitation. The soft sound of her dress, sweeping after her, the graceful movement, the gracious turn of the head, were all so many exquisite additional details to the exquisite room, so perfect in every point, in which she had housed him. But Beaufort's face was full of uneasiness and perplexity. He had floated so far away from

those innocent days in the Kander Thal. He had ceased to believe in the panaceas that had seemed all-powerful to him then. The wrongs of political economy and the rights of the helpless had ceased to occupy his mind. He had become one of the helpless himself, and yet had drifted, and been not much the worse. Now he had drifted into the most charming, sunshiny, landlocked harbour, where no fierce wind could trouble him more. He had no desire to invent labours and troubles for himself, to spend his strength in putting up beacons and lighthouses to which the people whom they were intended to help would pay no attention. He opened one of the windows and looked out upon the night, upon the soft, undulating landscape, half-lighted by a misty moon. Everything looked like peace out of doors, peace and every tranquil pleasure that the soul could desire were within. He gave an impatient laugh at himself and his wife, and life in general, as he stood cooling his hot forehead, looking out waiting her return. He was quite contented; why should

he be goaded forth to fight with windmills which he no longer believed to be knights in armour? Don Quixote disenchanted, ready himself to burn all his chevalier books, and see the fun of his misadventures, but urged to take the field by some delicate Dulcinea, could not have been more embarrassed and disturbed. It was too annoying to be amusing, and too tender and beautiful either to be angry with or to laugh at. What under these circumstances was a man who had long abandoned the heroic to do?

CHAPTER V

AFTER a great deal of travelling in the most beautiful scenery in the world, and after the excitement of settling down, of furnishing, of arranging, of putting all your future life in order, there is apt to follow a certain blank, a somewhat disconcerting consciousness that all expectation is now over, when you are left alone with everything completed to live that life to which you have been for so long looking forward. Lady Car was very conscious of this in her sensitive and delicate soul, although there was for a long time a sustaining force of expectation of another kind in her that kept her up. All the people in the neighbourhood, it is needless to say, made haste to call upon Lady Caroline Beaufort: and she found them a little flat, as country

society is apt to be. She went out with her husband a number of times to dinner parties, specially convoked in her honour, and did not find them enlivening. She was one of those women who never get rid of the ideal and always retain a vague hope in coming to a new place, in beginning anything new, that the perfect is at last to be revealed to her—the good society, the spirits *d'élite*, whom she has always longed for but never yet encountered. She did not encounter them here any more than in other places, and a sense of dull certainty settled down upon her after a while, which was depressing. Such impressions are modified when the idealist finds out that, however much his or her surroundings may lack the superlative, there is always a certain *fond* of goodness and of the agreeable and sympathetic in the dullest circle when you come to know it. Surrey, however, no more than any other place, discloses these homely, compensating qualities all at once, and the period of disenchantment came. Everything settled down, even the landscape

became less wide, less attractive, the woods less green, the cottage roofs less picturesque. The real encroached upon the glamour of the imagination at every corner, and Carry felt herself settle down. It is a process which every dreamer has to go through.

But it was a long time before her mind would consent to the other settling down, which took place slowly but surely as the days and the years went on. Beaufort was in reality a little stirred up at first by the revival of so many old plans and thoughts, though it was in her mind, not in his, that they revived. He was constrained by a hundred subtle influences to resume at least the attitude of a student. Her verses, which were so pretty, the gentle feminine music of a true, though small singer, were such a reproach to him as words cannot describe. She had picked up her thread, so slight, so fragile as it was, and resumed her little melodious strain with enthusiasm not less, but greater, than when she had dropped it in the despair of parting with her hero. The little

poem brought back to him faint, undefinable echoes of that past which seemed to be a thousand years off. What was it that he had intended to do which she remembered so well, which to him was like a forgotten dream? He could not pick up his thread; he had smiled at himself by turns during the progress of the intervening centuries over the futility of his forgotten ambition. 'I, too, used to mean great things,' he had said with a laugh and a sigh to the younger men: the sigh had been fictitious, the laugh more genuine. What a fool any man was to think that he could accomplish any revolution! What a silly business to think that with your feeble hand you could upset the economy of ages! The conceit, too! but he had been very young, he had said to himself, and youth is an excuse for everything. That any faithful memory should preserve the image of him as he was in those old days of delusion, ambition, and self-opinion, had seemed incredible to him. He was half affronted, as well as astonished, that Carry should have re-

tained that visionary delusion in her mind: but still her expectation was a curious stimulus. And the first steps into which he was forced by it deluded her as well as himself. He began to arrange his books, to search, as he persuaded himself, for old notes, a search which occupied a great deal of time and involved many discoveries, amusing to him, delightful to her. For weeks together this investigation, through all manner of old notebooks, occupied them both and kept Carry very happy. She was full of excitement as to what each new collection would bring forth. He had a great many notebooks, dating not only from his college days but even from his school time, and there was hardly one of them out of which some little fossil of the past, some scrap of verse or translation, did not come. Carry, delighted, listened to them all as to so many revelations. She traced him back to his boyhood, and found a pleasure beyond description in that record of all his intellectual vagaries, and the hopes and ambitions they expressed. Per-

haps had she read them calmly with her own eyes, although those eyes were full of glamour, faint lights of criticism might have arisen and revealed the imperfections. But he read them to her in his mellow voice, with little explanations, reminiscences not disagreeable to himself, and which suggested other and more lengthened recollections, all of which were delightful to his admiring wife. It was not till Christmas, when she suddenly woke up to the passage of time by the startling reminder of little Tom's return from school for the holidays, that she remembered how much time had passed. To be brought suddenly to a pause in the midst of one's enthusiasm is always disagreeable, and the thought had been uneasy in Carry's mind for several days before she put it timidly into words.

'It has all been delightful,' she said. 'To trace you back through all your schoolboy time and at college is so nice that I know I have been persuading you to make the most of it for my sake. But, Edward, you must

not humour me any more. I feel that it is wasting your time.'

'No,' he said, 'when one has to pick up one's thread it is best to do it thoroughly. This will all be of service, every word of it.'

'I see, you mean to begin with a retrospect,' she cried, brightening again.

'Not so much as a retrospect,' he said, with a twinge of conscience, 'but one's early ideas, though they are often absurd, are very suggestive.'

'Oh, not absurd,' she cried. It wounded her to hear such a word applied to anything of his.

But little Tom had come home for his holidays, which showed that it was four or five months since the settling down. They had taken possession of Easton in the end of August. Tom came home very manly and grown up after his first 'half' at school. He was close upon eleven, and he had a very high opinion of his own position and prospects. His school was a large preparatory one, where things were done as much as pos-

sible on the model of Eton, which was the goal of all the little boy's ambitions. It was a little disappointing after the first genuine moment of pleasure in coming home, and the ecstatic sense of being a very great man to Janet, to find that after all Janet was only a little girl and did not understand the half of what he told her. He felt the want of male society very much upon the second day, and to think that there would not be a fellow to speak to for a whole month damped the delightful prospect of being his own master for that time, which had smiled so much upon him. Janet, it is scarcely necessary to say, gave a boundless faith to her brother, and listened to the tale of his achievements, and of what the fellows did, with an interest unalloyed by criticism. Her mouth and her eyes were full of a round O! of wonder and admiration. She never tired of hearing of the feats and the scrapes and the heroic incidents of school. To dazzle her so completely was something; but a mind accustomed to the company of the nobler sex

soon tired of the tameness of feminine society, and with the candour of his age Tom very soon made it apparent that he was bored.

'There's a lot of houses about,' he said. 'Aren't there any fellows down there, or there'—he pointed to distant roofs and groups of chimneys appearing at intervals from among the leafless trees—'that one could speak to? It's awfully dull here after knowing so many at school.'

'There are some children at that white house with the blue roof,' said Janet, 'but they're not good enough, nurse says; and I don't know nobody to play wiz,' the little girl added rather wistfully—she made all her 'th's' into 'z's' still—'I only take walks.'

'Children!' said Tom contemptuously. 'I wasn't asking about children. I meant fellows at school. If they're at a good school they're good enough. I'll soon find out. When a fellow has been out in the world, and goes to school, you don't suppose he minds what nurse says.'

'Oh, but nurse says a great, great many

zings,' said Janet. 'She says Easton's a little poky house, and that we should be in our own family place. What's a family place? Do you know? It is something fazer is buried in,' the little girl added after a moment, with a little thrill of solemnity. Tom burst into a laugh in the pleasure of his superior knowledge.

'You *are* a little ass, Jan! Of course I know. My family place is a grand one, with a big tower, and a flag on it when I'm at home—like the Queen at Windsor! The worst is I'm never at home: but I shall be when I'm big, and then shan't we have times! I've told a lot of fellows. I'll have them up to my place in Scotland for the shooting, don't you know.'

Janet only gave him a look out of her large light eyes. 'Girls don't shoot,' she said. 'I don't want to be at your shooting. Tom, do you remember fazer? He's buried there.'

'Oh, humbug! he's buried in the churchyard, where all the dead people are buried.

Of course I remember him. What's that got to do with it? I remember having a ride on his big black mare, such a big tall beast, and nobody could ride her except me and—him you know. He was behind when I rode her, and she carried us both as easy as a lamb. Old Duncan told me so—as easy as a lamb—because she knew who was her master!' the boy cried, with the colour mounting up into his cheeks. He began to switch the chairs with a little cane he had in his hand, and bade them to 'get on' and 'gee-up,' to Janet's considerable disturbance, for she had already learned that a boy's boots were apt to be muddy, and that chairs covered with brocade, and carved and gilded, were not meant to be ridden or to gee-up.

'Don't, Tom,' she said; 'they're mozer's pretty chairs.'

'Oh, bother!' cried the boy, 'where's mother? I want to tell her lots of things, but I won't if she's so particular about her chairs and stays so long away.'

'She's in the library with Beau,' said

Janet; 'they are always in the library. It is so pretty. Mozer likes it better than the drawing-room. But they will soon come in for tea.'

'I say,' cried Tom, 'do you have tea here always, not in the nursery? Oh, I say! I am not going to stand that. I know what they do at afternoon tea. You have a small piece of bread and butter, or perhaps an atom of cake, and you mustn't make any crumbs or enjoy yourself at all. You should see our teas at school. There's sometimes three kinds of jam, and in summer the fellows have strawberries as many as ever they like, and this half Summerfield major was allowed cold partridge.'

'For tea!' cried Janet with ever so many notes of admiration.

'Oh, his people send him such whopping hampers,' said Tom; 'he could never get through it all if he didn't have it for tea.'

'Nasty meat!' said little Janet with a grimace; 'but the jam is very nice,' she added with a sigh. 'There's no nursery when you're gone. Mozer gives us very nice tea

and plenty of cake; but she thinks I am better downstairs, not always with nurse.'

'And do you think so? You were always a little——'

'It's nice when mozer talks to me and not to Beau,' said Janet with reluctance. The grievance of the many times when the reverse was the case was implied, not put into words. 'But when there is you and me it will be very nice,' cried the little girl. 'There is a plain little table in the corner not carved or anything. It has a cover on, but that comes off, and I am allowed to have it to paint pictures upon and play at anything you like. We'll have it between us in the corner as if it was a little party,' cried little Janet, 'and they will never mind us, as long as we don't make much noise.'

'But I want to make a noise. I want to have a real square meal. It isn't good for a fellow, when he's growing, to be kept short of his grub. I want——'

'Oh, Tom, what a horrible, horrible word!'

'Much you know!' cried the boy. 'Fellows' sisters all like it—to learn the same words as we say. But if you think I'm coming back from Hall's, where they have all Eton rules, to sit as quiet as a mouse in the drawing-room, and have afternoon tea like an old fogey, I shan't, and there's an end of it,' cried Tom.

Lady Car came in as he gave forth this determination in a loud voice. She came in very softly, as was her wont, with the soft trail of her satin gown on the soft mossy carpet, on which her light steps made no sound. In her eyes was still the dreamy smile of her pleasure in all the details and chronicles of a school-boy life, so elevated and ethereal, its dreams and its visions and its high purposes. She was imagining to herself a poem in which it might all be set forth in chapters or cantos. 'The dawning genius' would be the title of the first. She saw before her the spiritual being, all thought and enthusiasm, making a hundred chimeras divine—the boy-poet, the heir of all the ages,

the fine flower of human promise. Half the adoring wife and half the woman of genius, she came in softly, with delicate charms of verses already sounding in her mind, and the scheme of the poem rising before her. Not like the Prelude: oh no; but the development, the dawn (a far more lovely word), the dawning of genius, of which in its time it might be her delightful mission to record the completion too.

She was roused from this vision by the noisy boyish voice. 'I shan't, and there's an end of it,' cried Tom, and she raised her dreamy eyes, startled to see the boy standing red in the face and defiant, his legs apart, his sturdy little square figure relieved against the window. How different from the ideal boy of whom she had been dreaming! the real boy, her son.

They both looked at her with an alarmed aspect, not knowing what would happen. Poor Carry was the gentlest of mothers. She never punished them, never scolded, but yet no one could tell why, they had always the

air of being afraid of her. They looked at her now as children might have looked who were accustomed to be sent into solitary confinement, shut up in a dark closet, or some other torture. Tom's voice fell in a moment, and Janet came out in defence like the little woman in a weatherhouse, when the little man skulks indoors disconcerted by the good weather. Janet came forward with a little hand raised. 'Mozer, it was not naughtiness. It was because he has been out in the world and knows things different from me.'

'Yes?' said Lady Car, smiling upon them, 'and what are the things this man of the world knows? To be sure, dear, he must be greatly in advance of you and me.'

The children were all the more abashed by this speech, though its tone was so gentle. They stared at her for a moment with their father's face, dark and stolid, the likeness intensified in Tom by the sullen alarm of his look. She put out her hand to him, to draw him close to her. 'What is it,' she said, 'my

little boy?' She was, to tell the truth, rather afraid of him too.

'It's nothing,' Tom replied. 'It's something she's said.'

'Oh, Tom,' cried Janet with a sense of injury. 'Mozer, he says, they have such nice teas at school—strawberries, and sometimes cold partridge, and whopping hampers.'

'My dear!'

'That's how the fellows talk,' said Tom. 'That's not the right thing for a girl.'

'Was the cold partridge in the whopping hamper?' said a voice behind. 'Carry, I don't wonder the boy's indignant. You have sent him no hampers. A first half at school and not so much as a big cake. I feel for Tom. Never mind, old fellow; you see she never was at school.'

They had both turned round their anxious faces to him as he came in. They were instinctively jealous of him. Yet both turned with a certain relief, or at least Tom did so, who was aware that Beau was one of his own faction, a man, against the sway of

the everlasting feminine. Janet took the hand which the mother had stretched out towards her boy and clung to it, drawing herself close into Lady Car's skirts. Beau was not of her faction in any sense of the word. The little girl pulled her mother's face towards her, and whispered her tale into Carry's ear.

'To have your tea upstairs! Why, doesn't he want to be with us, dear, after being away so long? You shall have what you like best, my dear children. If you really prefer the nursery to the drawing-room, and my company.'

'He says they have three kinds of jam,' said Janet in her mother's ear, 'and do whatever they like,' she added after a pause.

Lady Car gave her husband a look which the children noted though they did not understand. There was a slight appeal in it, and some relief. He had said that she must keep them with her, as much as if he had not been there: that he would not separate her not for an hour, not for a meal from her children: and

she had thought it her duty to have them there, though their presence and his together kept Carry in a harassed consciousness of the two claims upon her. They concluded that mother was not angry with great relief; but they did not understand the guilty satisfaction of Carry in finding that they liked the nursery best.

CHAPTER VI

THE time of Tom's holidays was rather a holiday also for Beaufort, who, having got a certain amount of amusement out of the notebooks and their record of school-life, was beginning to be bored by himself, and to think, under his breath, what a little prig and ass he had been in his boyish days, and how astounding it was that Carry should take it all in with such undoubting faith. He was a little of a philosopher in his idle way, and Carry began to be a sometimes disconcerting but often amusing problem to him. He laughed softly sometimes when he was by himself to see how seriously she took him, and how much his youthful superiority impressed her. It had not been in his intention when he unearthed the notebooks to increase, as he had certainly

done, her admiration, and, consequently, her expectations of himself. He had hoped, if anything, to beguile her a little from the pursuit of results, to make her less in earnest about the great work on which she had set her heart. But his expedient had not succeeded. She was more than ever bent upon the fulfilling of that early promise which was so beautiful and so wonderful in her eyes. Beaufort was half flattered, half vexed by this result. It is hard to resent a woman's admiration even if it is of something which is no longer yourself. It softened his heart, but it embarrassed him more than ever, as it made her more and more sure. He took advantage of Tom with a little secret chuckle to himself behind backs. Tom amused this philosopher too. He liked to draw him out, to watch the movements of character in him, even to speculate what kind of a man it had been that had produced this child. He must be like his father, Beaufort said to himself, without any sentiment even of animosity towards Carry's husband. Certainly he had got the better of that man. He had obliterated

Torrance, as it were, from the face of the earth; but he had no such feeling as Carry had about Torrance's life and Torrance's money. He took it all much more calmly than she could do, not even thinking of the curiousness of the succession which made him owe all his comfort and happiness to Torrance. Tom, however, was the subject of various speculations in his stepfather's mind. If this was what the little Torrance was modified by Lindores, what must the original have been? And what would this one turn to? an ordinary country gentleman, no better or worse than his neighbours, or what? A vague sense in his mind that there might be future trouble to Carry in the child's development moved him mildly—for the distance between childhood and manhood seems long looking forward to it, though so short when we look back: and any such danger must be far in the future. It was rather as a droll little problem, which it was amusing to study, that Mr. Beaufort looked at Tom; but for that reason, and to free himself a little from the ever-increasing

pressure of his wife's solicitude in respect to his work and eager anticipation of something from him, he took during the holidays the greatest interest in the boy, going out with him, sometimes riding, sometimes driving, sometimes to the meet, where Tom's eagerness was scarcely to be restrained. Mr. Beaufort himself did not hunt. He was not an ungraceful horseman for a moderate and mild canter; but if he had ever been possessed of sufficient energy to follow the hounds, that energy had long left him. He did not dislike, however, to ride to the meet or drive his wife over, Tom accompanying them upon his pony. Lady Car thought it was nothing less than devotion to her son which induced him to depart from his studious seclusion on account of the boy. She was very grateful to her husband, yet deprecated gently. 'You are so very, very good to Tom: but I cannot bear to think of all the sacrifices you are making for him, Edward, wasting your time which is so much too valuable to be thrown away upon a little boy.'

'I wish my time was more valuable, to show you how willingly I would give it up for anything belonging to you, Carry, not to say for your boy.'

'Oh thanks, thanks, dear Edward; but I can't have you burdened with Tom.'

'I like it,' he said. 'I like—boys.' It was almost too much for him to say that he liked this particular boy. 'And Tom interests me very much,' he added. Carry looked at him with a wistful curiosity. A gleam of colour passed over her face. Was it possible that Tom was interesting to such a man as Edward Beaufort? She felt guilty to ask herself that question. She had been afraid that Tom was not very interesting, not a child to attract any one much who did not belong to him. To be sure the child did belong to him, in a sort of a way.

'So you like school, Tom,' said Beaufort, looking down from his tall horse at the little fellow on his pony, strenuously keeping up with him. Had Beaufort been a more athletic person, he would have appreciated more the

boy's determination not to be left a step behind.

'Well,' said Tom, reflectively, 'I like it, and I don't like it. I think lessons are great rot.'

'Oh, do you?' said his tall companion.

'Don't *you*, Beau? They don't teach anything a fellow wants. What's the good of Latin, let alone Greek? They're what you call dead languages, and we don't want what's dead. When you've got to make your living by them it's different, like Hall's sons that are going to be the schoolmasters when he dies.'

'Did you think of all that by yourself, Tom?'

'No,' said the boy after a stare of a moment, and some hesitation. 'It wasn't me, it was Harrison major. His father's very rich, and he's in trade. And Harrison says what's the good of these things. You never want them. They're only an excuse for sending in heavy bills, Harrison says.'

'He must be a great authority,' said Mr. Beaufort gravely.

'He knows a deal,' said Tom reassured; for he had some doubts whether Harrison major's opinions would have been received with the deference they deserved. 'He's the biggest fellow in the school, though he's not very swell in learning. But he doesn't mind. He says fellows that are to have plenty of money don't want it.'

'That's a frequent opinion of people in trade,' said Beaufort. 'I would not put too much faith in it if I were you.'

'Eh?' cried Tom, opening his big light eyes under his dark brows more widely than ever, and staring up into his stepfather's face.

'You will have plenty of money, I suppose?' said Beaufort calmly.

'Oh, don't you know? I'll be one of the richest fellows in Scotland,' cried the boy.

'Who told you that, Tom?'

'I don't know. I can't tell you. I know it, that's all. It was perhaps only nurse,' he added with reluctance; 'but she's been to my place, and she knows all about it. You can ask her if you haven't heard.'

'So you have got a place besides being so rich?' Beaufort said, in calm interrogation, without surprise.

Tom was very much embarrassed by this questioning. He stared at his stepfather more than ever. 'Hasn't mother told you? I thought she told you everything.'

'So did I. But all this about your place I never heard. Let's have the rest of it, Tom.'

'Oh, I don't know that there's much more,' said the boy. 'It's a great big place with a high tower, and a flag flying when I'm at home—like the Queen—and acres upon acres in the park. It was my father's, don't you know? and now it's mine.'

'How old are you, Master Tom?'

'Eleven in April,' said Tom, promptly.

'Then it will be ten years before you have anything to say to your place, as you call it. I've seen your place, Tom. It is not so very much of a place; as for a flag, you know we might mount a flag at Easton if we liked and nobody would mind.'

Tom's black brows had gathered, and his

eyes looked with that fierceness mingled with fear which belongs to childhood, into his step-father's face. He was very wroth to have his pretensions thus made light of, but the habitual faith of his age alarmed him with a sense that it might be true.

'We'll mount one this afternoon,' his tormentor said; 'it will be fun for you and me taking it down when your mother goes out for her drive, and hoisting it again when she comes back. She deserves a flag better than you do, don't you think? Almost as well as the Queen. The only danger is that the country people might take Easton for the Beaufort Arms, and want to come in and drink beer. What do you think?'

'I say, Beau, are you in real earnest about a flag?'

'To be sure. I don't know what you have on yours at the Towers, but we have a famous blazon on the Beaufort side. We'll get a square of silk from your mother, and paint it as soon as we go in. I forget what your arms are, Tom?'

'I don't know,' said the boy, humbly. 'I never heard anything about them. I didn't know you had arms on a flag.'

'Ah!' said Beaufort, 'you see there are a great many things you don't know yet. And about matters that concern gentlemen, I wouldn't advise you either to take nurse's opinion or that of your young man whose father is in trade.'

Tom rode along by his stepfather's side in silence for some time. He felt much taken down—crushed by a superiority which he could not resist, yet very unwilling to yield. There was always the uncomfortable conviction in his mind that what Beaufort said must be true, mingled with the uneasy feeling that Beau might be chaffing all the time, a combination confusing for every simple mind. Tom was not at all willing to give in. He felt instinctively that a flag at Easton would turn his own grandeur, which he believed in so devoutly, into ridicule: for Easton was not much more than a villa, in the suburbs of a little town. At the same time he could not

but feel that to haul it up and down when his mother went out or came in would be fun; and the painting of the flag with a general muddle of paints and means of *barbouillage* in general still greater fun, and the most delightful way of spending the afternoon.

'I say, Beau,' he asked, after a long interval, 'what's in your arms, as you call them? I should like to know.'

Beaufort laughed. 'You must not ask what's in them, but what they are, Tom. A fellow of your pretensions ought to know. Fancy a chatelain in ignorance of such a matter!'

'What's a chatelain? You are only laughing at me,' cried the boy, with lowering eyebrows. 'It's a thing mother wears at her side, all hanging with silver chains.'

'It's the master of a place—like what you suppose yours to be. My arms are rather too grand for a simple gentleman to bear. We quarter the shields of France and England,' said Beaufort, gravely, forgetting who his

companion was for the moment. Then he laughed again. 'You see, Tom, though I have not a castle, I have a flag almost as grand as the Queen's.'

All this was rather humbling to poor Tom's pride, and confusing to his intellect, but he came home full of the plan of painting and putting up this wonderful flag. There was an old flagstaff somewhere, which had been used for the decorations of some school feast. Beaufort, much amused, instructed his small assistant to paint this in alternate strips of blue and white. 'The colours of the bordure, you know, Tom.' 'Oh, are they?' cried Tom, determined to pretend to understand. And Lady Car found him in the early afternoon, in a shed appropriated to carpentering behind the house, delightfully occupied about his task, and with patches of blue and white all over him from shoe to chin.

'What are you doing, Tom?' she cried. Janet following stood transfixed with her eyes widening every moment—half with wonder, half with envy. What she would have given

to paint the staff and herself in imitation of Tom!

'It's the colours of the bordure,' said the boy. 'I'm doing it for Beau.'

'The colours of what?' Lady Car was as ignorant of heraldry as Tom himself.

'Have we got a bordure? and what's our colours? and I want to know what are the arms, mother. I mean my arms: for I suppose,' he said, pausing in his work to look at her, 'yours are just Beau's now?'

'What does the boy mean? said Carry. 'Janet, you must not go too near him; you will spoil your frock. Tom, your jacket will never be fit to be seen again.'

'I don't care for my jacket. Mother, look here. Beau's going to put up a flag for you like the Queen, and I'm doing the stick. But I want to know about my own shield, and my colours; and if I've got a bordure, and if we're in quarters, or what. I want to know about the flag at the Towers.'

Lady Car made a step backward as if she had received a blow. 'There was no flag at

the Towers—I mean there were no arms upon it.—There were no—who put such nonsense into your head, Tom?'

'It's not nonsense. Beau told me—he's going to give me a lesson how to do it. He knows all about it. He says it's no use asking nurse or Harrison major whose father is in trade. It's only gentlemen that have this sort of thing. Mother, have I got a bordure?'

'Mozer,' said little Janet, 'please buy him a bordure.'

Poor Carry was not fond of any allusion to her former home. She was glad to laugh at the little girl's petition—though with a tremor that was half hysterical. 'I don't know anything about it,' she said. 'I will buy him anything that he wants, that is good for him, but oh, dear, what a mess he is in! Your lines are not straight, and you are all over paint. Jan, come away from that painted boy.'

'Oh, mozer, let me stay!' cried Janet, possessing herself of a stray brush.

It was perhaps those black brows of theirs that gave them such an air of determination. Carry did not feel herself able to cope with the two little creatures who looked at her with their father's eyes. She had to yield oftener than was good for them or than she felt to be becoming. She took her usual expedient of hurrying in to her husband to consult him as to what it was best to do. He was in his library, and she had no doubt he was hard at work. It was generally with some little difficulty and after some delay that on ordinary occasions he had to be gently beguiled into his own sacred room after luncheon : but he had gone to-day at once with an alacrity which made Carry sure he had some new ideas to put down. And her heart was light and full of satisfaction. He was seated at his table leaning over it, so busy that he did not hear the door open, and she paused there for a moment, happiness expanding her breast, and a smile of tender pleasure on her face. She would not interrupt him when he was busy with

any trivial matter of hers. She stood and watched him with the purest satisfaction. Then she stole in quietly, not to interrupt him, only to look over his shoulder, to give him perhaps a kiss of thanks for being so busy. Poor Carry! what she found when she approached was that Beaufort's head was bent with every appearance of profound interest over an emblazoned book, from which he was drawing on a larger scale, upon a big sheet of paper, the Beaufort arms. She breathed forth an 'Oh!' of sickening disappointment; and he turned his head.

'Is it you, Carry? Look here. I have got a new toy.'

'So I perceive,' she said. It was all she could do to keep the tears from showing in her eyes; but he would not have seen them, having turned back to his work again.

'A moral purpose is a feeble thing,' he said over his compasses and pencils. 'I began it as a lesson to Tom, to take him down a bit; but I find it quite interesting enough on its own account. Look here.

We are going to rig you up a flag, as Tom says, like the Queen.'

Poor Carry! How her tender heart went up and down like a shuttlecock, as she stood with her hand on the back of his chair. Her eyes full of bitter tears of disappointment; the thought that it was out of interest in Tom and love for her that this futile occupation had been taken up, melted her altogether. How could she allow, even in her own mind, a shadow of blame to rest on one so tender and so good? She laid her hand upon his shoulder, and patted it softly, like the mother of a foolish, delightful child.

'Dear Edward, I almost grudge that you should think of so many things for me,' she said.

'My dear, it was not primarily for you, but as a lesson to Tom,' he said, fixing the leg of his compasses firmly in the paper. 'You must take him to—his place as he calls it, Carry. But I confess that for the moment I had forgotten my object. To give a moral lesson is a fine thing; but it's nothing to the invention of a new toy.'

CHAPTER VII

THE flag, so casually suggested, became in effect a very favourite toy, both with Beaufort and his stepson. The one was a very ordinary little boy, the other a highly cultivated man. But they seemed to take equal pleasure in the flutter of the flag from the blue and white staff which Tom had painted with so much trouble, and in rushing out to pull it down when Lady Car in her little pony carriage drove from the door. They sometimes tumbled over each other in their haste and zeal to perform this office. And Beau's legs were so much the longest. It gave him a great and scarcely just advantage over Tom.

Carry was pleased, she was touched and flattered, and such vanity as she had was so delicately ministered to, that for some time

this little folly which took the air of homage to her, made her feel happy. To see the grave and gentle philosopher, with a long swift stride, almost stepping over the children to get at the cord, and pull up the fluttering flag, a brilliant piece of colour among the bare trees, as she appeared with her ponies in the little avenue! It was a little absurd, but so sweet. Edward did it, she allowed herself to imagine, as he had said, for a lesson to Tom —to teach him thus broadly though symbolically the honour that was due to his mother—not to Carry individually who never claimed homage, but to the mother whose claims, perhaps, the boy was not sufficiently conscious of. This was not at all the lesson which Beaufort had intended to teach Tom—but what did that matter? It had a certain effect in that way, though none in the way that Beaufort intended. It did give Tom an impression of the importance of his mother. 'Mother's not just a woman like the rest,' he said to Janet. 'She is what you may call a great lady, Jan, don't you know? There's

Mrs. Howard and that sort; you don't run up flags for them. Mother's really something like the Queen—it's in earnest. Beau thinks so. I can tell you he's awfully proud of mother. And so am I too.'

'Oh, Tom, so am I.'

'Yes, but you're just natural. You don't understand. But me and Beau know why we do it,' said Tom. And when he got back to school if he did not boast so much of his place in Scotland, having acquired an uneasy sort of doubt of its magnificence, he intimated that his parentage was not like that of the others. 'When my people drive from the door the flag goes down,' he said. 'It's such fun rushing and getting hold of the rope and up with a tug, as soon as they come into the avenue. Sometimes, when it's been raining, the rope won't run. It's such fun,' cried Tom, while even Harrison major's mouth was closed. The flag was beyond him. As for Janet, she looked on staring and observed everything, and drew many silent conclusions never perhaps to be revealed.

But when the holidays were over Carry's anxious expectations and suspense increased again. Beaufort kept to his new toy even when Tom was gone. He would interrupt his studies, springing up, whatever he was doing, to pull down or put up that flag, till poor Carry's heart grew sick of the little formula which accompanied all her movements. She began to feel that he liked to be disturbed and that idling forth into the air to perform this little ceremony was more delightful to him than to get on with that work, which, so far as she could make out, was not yet begun. He had found more notebooks after Tom went away, but the notebooks now began to pall a little. And slowly, slowly, Carry's eyes began to open. She never whispered it to herself, but she began to understand as the years went on many things that were never put into words. She became first of all very sick of the notebooks and the wonderful number of them, and all those tantalising scraps which never came to anything. Her own little poem

which she had begun had gone no further. The dawning of genius—but the dawn was still going on. It had never come to be day yet. Would it ever come? Slowly, reluctantly, this began to be revealed to her, broken by many gleams of better hope, by moments when she said to herself that she was the most unjust woman in the world, grudging her husband the leisure in which alone great thoughts can develop—grudging him the very quiet which it had been the desire of her heart to attain for him. The most unjust of women! not his wife and assistant, but his judge, and so hard a one! It was bitter sweet to Carry to be able thus to condemn herself; but it did not change the position of affairs.

One evening they were seated together in a happy mood. It was summer, and it was some years after the incidents above described. Carry by this time knew almost everything about Beaufort, and what he could not or would not do. And yet her expectations were not quenched. For it is

hard to obliterate hope in a woman; and now and then at intervals there would still spring up little impulses in him, and for a few days she would forget (yet all the same never forget) her dolorous discoveries and certainties. It was after one of those *élans* when he had displayed every appearance of being at work for several days, and Lady Car's heart despite of a thousand experiences had risen again, that in the evening, in a very sweet summer twilight, they sat together and watched the stars coming out over the tops of the waving trees. Janet, now grown almost to her full height—she was never very tall—had been wandering about flitting among the flowers in her white frock not unlike (at a distance) one of the great white lilies which stood about in all the borders. It was early in July, the time when these flowers are at their sweetest. The air was full of their delicate fragrance, yet not too full; for there was a little warm breeze which blew it over the whole country away to the heather and gorse on the Haslemere

side, and brought back faint echoes of wilder scents, the breath of the earth and of the moors. Janet had been roaming about, never without a glance through the branches at the two figures on the lawn. She was like one of the lilies at a distance, tall for fourteen, though not tall for a full-grown woman, and slim too in the angularity of her age, though of a square solid construction which contradicted all poetical symbols. She had always an eye upon them wherever she went. Nothing had changed her spectator attitude, not even the development of many tender and loyal feelings altogether unknown to the outer world. So far as appeared outside, Janet was still the same steady little champion of her brother that she had been from her baby days, and not much more. The pair who were seated on the lawn were as always conscious of the girl's presence, which was a certain restraint upon their freedom. There was not between them all the same ease that generally exists in a family. Though she was quite out of hearing, they did not

even talk with perfect freedom. When she had gone to bed, called by the all-authoritative nurse of whom even her mistress was a little afraid, Beaufort drew a long breath. He had a sort of habitual tenderness for Janet as a child who had grown up under his eyes and was one of the accessories of daily life. But yet he was more at his ease when she was gone. 'How dark it is getting!' he said; 'the light comes from the lilies not from the sky, and Janet's white frock, now she has gone, has taken a little away.'

'My poor little Janet,' said Lady Car. 'I wish I could think she would be one of those who give light.'

'Like her mother. It is a pity they are so little like you Carry. Both the same type, and that so much inferior. But children are very perverse in their resemblances as much as in other things.'

'Nobody can say Janet is perverse,' said Lady Car with that parental feeling which, though not enthusiastic itself, can bear no remark upon the children who are its very

own; and then she went back to a more interesting subject. 'Edward, in that chapter you have just begun——'

'My dearest, let us throw all the chapters to the winds. In this calm and sweetness what do we want with those wretched little philosophical pretences? The world as far as we can see it seems all at peace.'

'But there is trouble in it, Edward, all the same, trouble to be set right.'

'Not much, so far as we can see. There is nothing very far wrong in our little town: every "poor person," as you ladies call them, has half-a-dozen soft philanthropists after him to set him right; and we don't even see the town. Look at all those dim lines of country, Carry. What a breadth in them, and no harm anywhere, the earth almost as soft as the sky! Don't let us think of anything, but only how sweet it all is. I am glad that shrubbery was cut away. I like to see over half the world—which is what we are doing—as far as eye can carry, it comes to much the same. May I light my cigarette?'

'Edward,' she cried, 'it is all quite true. There is not much harm just here; but think how much there is in the world, how helpless the poor people are, how little, how little they can do. And what does it matter that we all try a little in the way of charity? Right principles are the only things that can set us all right. I have heard you say a hundred times—in the old days——'

'You have heard me say a great deal of nonsense in the old days.'

'Was it all nonsense,' cried Lady Car, 'all that was said and thought then? There seemed so many splendid things we could do; set up a standard of higher justice, show a better way both to the poor and the rich, and—and other things. I love the landscape and the sweet evening, Edward, oh so much! and to sit and look at them with you, and to feel all the peace around us, and the quiet, and that there is no reason why we should not be happy; but better than that I should love to see you lift up that standard, and show the better way, you who can do it,

you who understand all the problems. That is what I wish, that is what I have always wished—above all, above all!' she cried, clasping her hands. The enthusiasm of her sensitive nature overwhelmed Carry. She could not contain herself any longer. 'I would rather even not have been happy and seen you great and doing great work,' she said.

He stretched out his hand and took hers which he held and caressed softly. 'My dear little enthusiast!' he said.

'Don't say that, Edward!' she cried quickly; 'that was all very well in the old days, which you say were nonsense. I was only a girl then, but now I am middle-aged and not to be put off in that way. I am not a little enthusiast, I am an anxious woman. You should not put me off with phrases of the past.'

'You are always a girl, Carry, if you should live to be a thousand,' he said with a faint laugh. 'If you were so middle-aged as you say, you would be content with results as

we have them. Here we are, we two, together with all the happiness we once so eagerly looked forward to, and which seemed for a time hopeless—very well off, thanks to you. Able to surround ourselves with everything that is delightful and pleasant, besides the central fact of being together, able to help our poor neighbours in a practical way: thanks to you again. Not so much as a crumple in our bed of roses—not a thorn. My dear, that is what you would think of, if you were middle-aged as you say.'

'Then let me be a silly girl, as in the old times,' she cried, 'though it was all nonsense, nothing but nonsense, as you say.'

'Softly, softly,' he said, taking her hand again, 'let us discriminate, Carry. Love can never be nonsense which has lasted like ours. My love, you must not blaspheme.'

'Love!' she cried. Carry's whole frame was trembling, her heart beating to her feet, to her fingers, in her throat. She seemed to herself only to be a slim sheath, the merest covering for that convulsive heart. There

was something like—could it be scorn in the inflection of her voice. He took her by both hands now, throwing down the cigarette which had betokened the entire ease of his mind, and drew her towards him. Something like alarm had come into his tone, and something like indignation too.

'Carry,' he said, holding her hands fast, 'Carry, what do you mean? Not that my love was nonsense, which never wavered from you, notwithstanding everything—not that you distrust me?'

The darkness is an advantage in many an interview like this. It prevented him from seeing all that was in Lady Car's face, the impetuous terrible question, the impulse of wild scepticism and unbelief, the intolerable impatience of the idealist not to be altogether restrained. Her eyes asked what her lips could never say. Why did you leave me to be another man's wife? Why let me be strained, humbled, trodden under foot? Why expose me to all the degradations which nobody could impose on you—and why,

why? But Carry said none of these things. She could not. There are some things which the religion of the heart forbids ever to be put in words. She could not say them. He might have read them in her eyes, but the darkness kept that revelation from him which would have been more startling than anything Beaufort had ever encountered in his life. Finally Carry, being only a woman and a sensitive and delicate one, fell into the universal feminine anti-climax, the foolishness of tears. How often does their irrestrainable *non-sequitur* put the deepest reasons out of court, and turn the most solemn burden of the soul into apparent foolishness —a woman's tears, which often gain a foolish cause, but as often lose a strong one, reducing the deep-hearted to the level of the shallow, and placing the greatest offender in the delightful superior position of the man who makes allowances for and pardons! Beaufort gathered her into his arms, made her have her cry out upon his shoulder, soothed and calmed and caressed her out of

her passion of feeling. If any one could have whispered in his ear what was in the passionate heart that throbbed on his shoulder! but he would have smiled and would not have believed. She was a little enthusiast, still the same young ethereal poet as ever, a creature made up of lovely impulses and sympathies and nerve and feelings—his sweet Carry, his only love.

After this evening Lady Car had a little illness, nothing of any consequence, a chill taken sitting out too late on the lawn, a headache, probably neuralgic—a little ailment, quite simple, such as ladies often have, keeping them in their rooms and dressing-gowns for a day or two. A woman scarcely respects herself who has not these little breaks from time to time, just to show of what delicate and fragile stuff she is made. But she emerged from her room a little different, no one could quite tell how, with a different look in her face, quieter, less given to restless fits, more composed and gentle. She had always been gentle, with the softest

manners in the world, so that the change was not apparent to the vulgar. Beaufort perceived it for the first day or two, and it gave him a faint shock, as of something invisible, some sudden mystery between them; but the feeling passed over very quickly with a conviction of the utter absurdity of any such impression. Janet, who had never any words in which to convey her discoveries, and no one to say them to if she had found the words, saw it more clearly, and knew that something had happened, though what she could not divine. There were some faint changes scarcely perceptible, but developing gradually, in Lady Car's habits too. She was less in the library with her husband, abandoning this custom very slowly in the most natural way in the world, compelled by other duties which naturally, with a daughter growing up, became more important every day.

CHAPTER VIII

Lady Car did many things after this period which she had previously disliked to do; but there was one thing which she did not for a long time consent to, and that was to open the house in the North which was called the Towers, which Tom had been used to speak of as 'my place,' and which Beaufort thought it foolish of her not to inhabit. He did not know the ghosts that dwelt there. He did not consider that it was the house of her first husband, the house she was taken to as a most wretched bride after the marriage into which she had been forced, and that the dreadful time of that bridehood, and the years she had lived with Torrance, and the moment of awful ecstasy when she had heard of his death, all lingered there waiting for

her. Mr. Beaufort only thought it was foolish, when she had a handsome house in Scotland at her command, that the family did not go there in the autumn, where it was natural that families should go. But he was not a man to bore her by any repetition of this wonder. He had been a little surprised, and even, it must be allowed, a little disconcerted, to find himself so much more at his own disposal than of old, and now that Carry was not always at his side his habits, too, changed imperceptibly. His beautiful library was still his chief haunt, but he read the papers there and all kinds of profane things. And he went a great deal to Codalton, where the county club was, and spent a part almost of every day there. It was not that he had any great liking for the gentlemen who found it such a resource. He kept the position among them of a man who was not as they were—a person superior in many ways, a writer (though he never wrote anything), a philosopher. No doubt he was entitled to that last character. He was very civil to

them all, but regarded them from an altitude, making notes of what he called their 'humours' and making them the subject of many satirical descriptions when he went home. Sometimes he went up to London for the day, at first to consult books, but latterly without alleging any such reason, and went to many places where there were no books to consult. But it was very rarely that he did not return home in the evening. He had no desire for dissipations of any kind. He was far too much a philosopher, not to say a gentleman. Tom, perhaps, described it best in his schoolboy language when he said that Beau liked to loaf. So he did. He had no twist in his character. Had Lady Car followed him in all his excursions she would have found nothing to object to, and indeed he would have enjoyed them much more if she had. But he had, as a matter of fact, no mission such as she had credited him with; he had no gospel to preach, nothing at all to say. If there had ever been anything more than youthful excitement and ambition in his

plans, it had all evaporated in his listless life. He might have pushed on—many young men do—and insisted upon marrying his love, and saved her from Tom Torrance and the dreadful episode of her first marriage. He might have realised at last some of his early promises and anticipations. He might at least have roused himself from his sloth, and written that book upon which her heart was so set. But, indeed, that last was doubtful, for he might only have proved that he could not write a book, which would have been harder on Lady Car than to think he would not. The end of all thing was, however, that he was immensely relieved, and yet made vaguely miserable by the change that had now come over his life. There was a change. The sweet and constant, if sometimes a little exacting companionship of the early years was over, which gave him a vague ache as of desertion, especially at first. And Carry was changed. Her questions, her arguments, her constant persuasions and inducements to go on with that book (expressing always a

boundless trust in his powers which it pained him to part with) were all over. On the other hand, he had regained his liberty, was now free to do as he pleased—an indescribable boon. What he pleased to do was always quite gentlemanlike, quite *comme il faut.* There was no reason why he should be restrained in doing it. He liked to read, and also to think, without it being supposed to be necessary that anything should come of his reading and thinking. He liked to go to his London club now and then and have the stimulus of a little conversation; he liked, when there was nothing else to do, to go into Codalton, and talk a little to the country gentlemen and the smaller fry about who were sufficiently important to belong to the county club, and to come in occasionally to sit with his wife in her drawing-room, to read to her, to tempt her to talk, even to give Janet a little lecture upon literature, which she cared nothing about. He was on those occasions a delightful companion, so easy in his superior knowledge, so unpretending. In

their rich and easy life, without cares, without any embarrassment about ways and means, or any need to think of to-morrow, he was indeed an admirable husband, a most charming stepfather, pleasant all round. What could any woman have wished for more?

There was one period in this easy and delightful life which brought the change home to Beaufort with curious force for a moment and no more. It was just after the publication of a book which went over his ground, the ground which it had always been supposed he was going to take. It forestalled him on many points, but in some went quite against him, contradicting his views. He brought in the volume with some excitement to his wife, and read to her those portions with which he disagreed. 'I must do something about this,' he said; 'you see the fellow takes half my argument, and works out from it quite a different conclusion. I have been too supine. I must really get to work at once, and not suffer myself to be forestalled and contradicted like this.'

'Yes, Edward,' said Carry gently. She smiled very sweetly upon him, with a curious tender smile, but she did not say any more.

'You speak as if you did not think it worth my while,' he said, a little annoyed by her composure.

'Oh, no. I think it quite worth your while,' she said. He went off a little disturbed, vexed, half angry, half sad, but certainly stimulated by her. Was it indifference? What was it? Had she responded as of old they would have talked the matter over between them and taken away all its interest; but as she did not respond Beaufort felt the fire burn. He went off to his room, and got out all his preparatory notes and the beginning of the long interrupted manuscript, and worked with vigour all night, throwing his opposite views hastily upon paper. Next day he announced to his wife that he meant 'to review that fellow's book'—as the quickest and surest way of expressing his dissent. 'Yes,' she said once more, but with a little rising colour, 'when, Edward?' 'Oh, I'll

send it to "Bowles,"' he said, meaning 'The Nineteenth Century' of that day. Of course, 'The Nineteenth Century' itself had not yet begun its dignified career. And he did an hour's work that morning, but with softened zeal; and in the afternoon he repeated to himself that it was scarcely worth his while. The people who had read that fellow's book would not care to read a review; they would be people on the other side, quite unlikely to pay any attention to the opposite argument. And as for the general public, the general public did not care a straw for all the social philosophy or political economy in the world. So, after another hour's deliberation he put all the papers back again—What was the use?—and went into the county club and brought back a very amusing story of the complicated metaphors and confused reasoning of some of the gentlemen there. It did not strike him that Carry never asked whether he had finished the review, or how he was going to treat the subject. But he remarked her smile with a curious sensation which he

could not explain. It seemed to him something new—very sweet (her smile had always been sweet), very patient, indulgent, with a look of forgiving in it, though he did not know very well what there was to forgive. He forgot in a short time all about the answer he had intended to write to that book, and even the review into which his intended answer had so soon slid—in intention; but he was haunted for a very long time by Carry's smile. What did it mean?

Tom and Janet were just as little aware why it was that their mother was so much more with them than of old, but this had come on gradually, and it did not strike them except by moments. 'Why, you're always with mother now,' Tom said when he came home for his holidays. He was now at Eton, and, though he had been in several scrapes, had managed to keep his place and was in high hopes of getting into the boats, which was the only distinction he had any chance of.

'Yes,' said Janet sedately, 'for I'm growing up now, and mother says I want her most——'

'Isn't it awful sap?' said Tom, which was Eton (at that time) for boredom and hard work. He had the grace to speak low, and Janet gave him a glance upward with raised eyelids, and they both laughed, but softly that no one might ask why.

'She thinks of such a lot of things that no one can be expected to know,' said Tom; 'not that I mind, for she lets me alone now. But I suppose you've got to read books all day.'

'Oh, no. Oh, Tom, we oughtn't to talk like this and laugh, for she's—mother's very kind. She is indeed. She sees in a moment if I'm tired.'

'She'd need to,' said Tom, 'but I don't suppose girls mind. You come out now and have a game. Will she let you? If she won't, just steal away——'

'Oh, Tom,' cried Janet again, 'how can you speak of mother so? She never stops any fun, never—when there is any,' the girl added after a pause.

Lady Car was at the other end of the room, seated in the recess of a broad window

which looked over the wide landscape. She had been waiting for Janet, who had asked her assistance in some work she was doing—trumpery work such as disturbed all Carry's prejudices. Janet was painting flowers upon some little three-legged stools for a bazaar, and though she only copied the 'patterns,' she required in the execution some hints from her mother, who had once made considerable progress in the study of art. Janet was entirely unaware that Lady Car's dreamy landscapes, which were full of distance and suggestion if nothing else, were in any way superior to her 'patterns,' and had made her call for aid with the frankest confidence that what she was doing was excellent art. And Carry had prepared the palette from which the dahlias and red geraniums were to be painted with as much care as if it had been wanted by Raphael. When she saw the two, after their whispered conversation at the door, suddenly disappear, perhaps she was not altogether sorry. It is possible that the painting of the stools was 'sap' to the

mother also. She smiled at them with a little wave of her hand and shake of her head as they passed the window, in mild allusion to the abandoned work; but perhaps she was as much relieved as Janet was. She laid back her head upon the dim-coloured satin of her chair, and watched the two young creatures with their racquets, Janet carrying in her apron a supply of balls for their game. Seventeen and a half, fifteen and a half—in the bloom which was half infantile, half grown up, all fresh about them, nothing as yet to bring in black care. They were not handsome, but Tom had a sturdy manliness and strength, and Janet, her mother thought, looked everything that was simple and trustworthy—a good girl, not clever—but very good-natured and kind; and Tom not at all a bad boy—rough a little, but that was mere high spirits and boyish exuberance. They were neither of them clever. She said to herself, with a faint smile, how silly she had been!

How she had worshipped talent—no, not

talent, genius—and had hoped that they would surely have had some gleam of it—the two whom she had brought into the world. They had been surrounded with beautiful things all their lives. When other people read foolish nursery stories to their children she had nourished them upon the very best—fables and legends which were literature as well as story—yet Janet liked the patterns for her stools better than all the poems and pictures, and Tom never opened a book if he could help it. And what matter? she said to herself, with that faint smile of self-ridicule. The children were none the worse for that. Her fantastic expectations, her fantastic disappointment, what did they matter? She was altogether a most fantastic woman—everybody had said it all her life, and she recognised fully the truth of the accusation now. Who should be so happy as she? Her husband so kind, always with her, thinking of everything that would make her happy. Her children so good (really so good!), nice, well-conditioned—Tom so

manly, Janet all that a girl should be, very, very different indeed from Carry as a girl. But what a good thing that was; Janet would have no silly ideal, would desire no god to come from the skies, would not torment herself and every one about her with fantastic aspirations. She would love some good honest young fellow when her time came, and would live the common life, the common happy life, as the family at Easton were doing now. Edward, gone over to Codalton to the county club—the natural resource of a man in the country; the brother and sister playing tennis on the lawn—the boy expecting to get into the boats, the girl delighted with a new pattern for her stools. And no cloud anywhere, no trouble about settling them in life, no embarrassment about money or anything else. How happy a family! Everything right and pleasant and comfortable. As Carry lay back in her chair, thinking all these happinesses over, her eyes ran over with sudden tears—for satisfaction surely and joy.

When the tea-tray came in the young

ones appeared with it, very hungry, and ready for the good things which covered the little table. Lady Car watched them consume the cakes with the same smile which had puzzled Beaufort. 'Would you really like so very much,' she said with a little hesitation, a lingering in her voice, 'to go to the—Towers for the next holidays, Tom?'

'Should I like!' cried the boy, jumping up with his mouth full of bread and butter. 'Why, mother, better than anything in the world!'

'Oh mother!' Janet cried, with a glow upon her face. She had passed the bread-and-butter stage, and was cutting herself a hunk of cake. The knife fell out of her hand from excitement and pleasure.

'Shall you both like it so very much? Then,' said Lady Car, sitting straight up with a look of pale resolution in her face which did not seem called for by such a simple determination, 'then, children, you shall go——'

'Hurrah!' cried Tom, 'that's the jolliest

thing I've heard for long; that's exactly what I want! I want to know it,' he cried; 'I do want to know it before I go there and settle down.'

Lady Car turned her eyes upon him with a wonderful, inquiring look. Nothing, indeed, could be more natural. Yet to hear that someone would go there, not for holidays, but to settle down, oppressed poor Carry's soul. She faded into whiteness, as if she were fainting. It seemed to her that his father looked over Tom's shoulder—the father whom the boy was so like—his living image, as people said. Not so tall and strong, but with the features and the eyes and the aspect, which poor Carry had so feared.

'Beau!' cried both the young people in one voice. 'Oh, I believe it's his doing, Tom!' 'He must have a hand in it, Jan!' Beau, next holidays we are going to the Towers. Mother says so. We are going next holidays to the Towers.'

'Your mother is full of sense,' said Beau-

fort, who had just come in. 'I knew that she would see it to be the right thing to do.

Poor Carry! She felt as if she could not bear it, this sacrifice of all her own feelings and wishes. She said to herself that she could not do it; that before the time came she must die! And perhaps there was a forlorn hope that this was what would happen in her heart as she sat and saw her husband and her children rejoicing over the tea-table —most naturally, most justly, she knew; at least it was but natural and just so far as the children were concerned.

She had to give great orders and make many arrangements about the opening up of the house. It was so long since it had been shut up. Tom had been only six, and now he was seventeen and a half. She wrote to her sister Edith and to Edith's husband, John Erskine, as well as to the factor on the estate and the servants who were in charge. And there were a number of things sent from town 'to make it habitable.' To make it habitable! She could not help the feeling

that this was what *he* would have liked least of all, when she remembered the wonderful costly catafalques of furniture of which he had been so proud, and the decorations that would make poor Edward miserable. Edward did not mind the fact that it was *his* money which made Easton so comfortable; but to put up with his wardrobes and sideboards—that was a different matter. Even in her humiliation and in the much greater troubles she had to occupy her, she could not help a shudder to think of Edward in the midst of all those showy relics of the past. Eleven years had not dimmed her own recollection of her old surroundings. She remembered with an acute recollection, which was pain, where everything stood, and sent detailed directions as to how all was to be altered. 'Dear Edith, do see that everything is changed. Don't let anything look as it used to do. It would kill me if the rooms were left as they were,' she wrote to her sister. 'Do—do see that everything is changed.'

Perhaps it was by dint of having thus exhausted all feeling and forestalled all emotion that when she did find herself at the Towers at last, it was almost without sentiment of any kind. Edith had carried out her *consigne* very well, and she was standing under the mock mediæval doorway to receive her sister when Lady Car drove up. The sisters had not met for a long time—not for several years, and the meeting in itself did much to break the spell. Carry awoke with wonder and a little relief to find herself next morning in her old home, and to feel that she did not mind. Torrance did not meet her at his own hearth; he did not look at her from the mirror; he did not follow her about the corridor. She was very much relieved after all her imaginary anguish to feel that the reality was less dreadful than she had feared.

And it was something to see the children so truly happy. The quiet little Janet, who said so little, was quite roused out of herself. She became almost noisy, rushing with Tom from the top of the tower to the very cellars,

going over everything. Her voice mingled shrill in the hurrah! with which Tom contemplated the flag of which he had dreamed, the sign of his own domination in this house of his fathers, which was to the boy as if it had been the shrine of the noblest of races. 'I see now,' he said, 'that rag at Easton was all sham, but this is the real thing.' 'This is the real thing,' said Janet decisively, 'the other was only nonsense.' They had not been twenty-four hours in the place before they had seen, and as they said recognised, everything. All their upbringing in scenes so different, all the associations of their lives, seemed to go for nothing. They were intoxicated with pleasure and pride. A couple of young princes restored to their kingdom could not have accepted their grandeur with a more undoubting sense that they had at last recovered their rights.

The house soon filled with visitors and company, guests who came for sport, and guests who came for curiosity, and the great county people who were friends of the

Lindores, and the smaller people who were friends of Torrance. And with both sets of these visitors Carry could not help seeing — or perhaps she only imagined it — that though her husband and herself were treated with great courtesy, it was Tom who was looked to with the chief interest. He was the future possessor of all. Though she had entire sway in the house as she never had before, yet she was nothing but a shadow, as she had always been. And the children in their haste to enjoy would have liked if possible to ignore her too. As for Tom, he got altogether beyond her control. When he was not shooting, taking upon himself premature airs of the master, he was riding about the country as his father had done, going to all kinds of places, making acquaintances everywhere. He came home on several occasions, after a day of roaming, with wild eyes, half-falling, half-leaping off his horse, making his entrance audible by all the tumult of rough excitement, calling loudly to the servants, discharging oaths at them for imaginary delay.

The first time this happened, Lady Car only suspected it with alarm, which everybody about stilled as best they could, getting the young culprit out of the way. 'The matter? there is nothing the matter?' Beaufort said, coming to her, a little pale, but with a laugh. 'Tom has lost his temper. He is vexed with himself for being late for dinner. I'll have a talk with him by-and-by.' 'Is that all, Edward?' she said. 'What should it be more?' her husband replied. But on another occasion, as evil luck would have it, Tom made his entrance just as the party, a large one, in which his place was vacant, was sweeping across the hall to dinner, and his mother, who came last, had the full advantage of that spectacle. Her son, standing all be-spattered, unsteady, his dull eyes fierce with angry light. 'Hallo, mother! I'm a bit late. Never mind. I'll come as I am,' he cried, steadying himself, beating his muddy boot with his whip. Lady Car threw an anguished look at the new butler, who stood splendid and indifferent at the door. There was not

even an old servant full of resource to coax the foolish wretched boy away.

She had to go in and sit down smiling at the head of her table, and entertain her guests, not knowing any minute whether the boy might not burst in and make his shame visible to all. In the midst of the sounds of the dinner-table, the talk, and the ring of the knives and forks, and the movements of the servants, other sounds seemed to reach her ear of loud voices and noise outside. She had to bear it all and make no sign, but talk that her neighbours on each side might not notice, with what was almost noisiness for Carry. Perhaps, though it seems more horrible at such a crisis to be in the midst of the compulsory make-belief of society, it is better for the sufferer. She kept up, and never winced till the dinner was over, and the endless hour in the drawing-room after, and all the guests gone, those who were from the neighbourhood to their homes, those who were in the house to their rooms. Then, and only then, did she dare to breathe, to give way to the

devouring anxiety in her mind. She had bidden her husband 'Go, go!' to the smoking-room, or anywhere with the last guests, and she was alone. The whole house had been changed; the old furniture displaced, all its associations altered: and yet in that moment everything came back again, the catafalques of old, the vulgar splendour, the old dreary surroundings. Her boy! Her boy! She thought she saw his father come out before her, as she had feared to see him all these years, saying with his old brutal laugh, '*Your* boy! none of yours. Mine! mine!'

CHAPTER IX

BEAUFORT behaved very well at this crisis of domestic history. He shook off his usual languor and became at once energetic and active. What he said to Tom remains undisclosed, but he 'spoke to' the boy with great force, and even eloquence, representing to him the ruin entailed by certain bad habits, which—more than other vices, probably worse in themselves—destroy a man's reputation and degrade him among his fellows. Though he was himself a man over-refined in his ways, he was clever enough to seize the only motives which were likely to influence the ruder nature of his stepson. And then he went to poor Carry, who in this home of evil memories sat like a ghost surrounded by the recollections of the past, and seeing for ever before

her eyes the disordered looks and excited eyes of her boy. He was not, alas! the son of her dreams, the child whom every mother hopes for, who is to restore the ideal of what a man should be. Many disappointments had already taught Lady Car that her son had little of the ideal in him, and nothing, or next to nothing, of herself; but still he was her son: and to think of him as the rude and violent debauchee of the country-side seemed more than she could bear. Beaufort came in upon her miserable seclusion like a fresh breeze of comfort and hope. This was so far from his usual aspect that the effect was doubled. Tender he always was, but to-day he was cheerful, hopeful, full of confidence and conscious power. 'There must be no more of this,' he cried. 'Come, Carry, have a little courage. Because the boy has been a fool once—or even twice—that is not to say that there is anything tragical in it, or that he is abandoned to bad habits. It is probably scarcely his fault at all—a combination of circumstances. Nobody's fault, indeed. Some

silly man, forgetting he was a boy, persuading him out of supposed hospitality to swallow something his young head could not stand. How was the boy in his innocence to know that he could not stand it? It is a mere accident. My love, you good women are often terribly unjust and sweeping in your judgments. You must not from one little foolish misdemeanour judge Tom.'

'Oh, Edward!' she cried, 'judge him! my own boy! All that I feel is that I would rather have died than seen that look, that dreadful look, in my child's face.'

'Nonsense, Carry. That is what I call judging him. You should never have seen it, but as for rather dying—— Would Tom be the better for it if he lost his mother, the best influence a boy can have——?'

She shook her head: but how to tell her husband of the spectre who had risen before her in the house that was his, claiming the son who was his, his heir and not Carry's, she did not know. Influence! she had been helpless by the side of the father, and in the

depths of that dreadful experience Carry foresaw that the son, so like him, so moulded upon that man whom she had feared to the bottom of her heart, and alas! unwillingly hated, had now escaped her too. There are moments which are prophetic, and in which the feeblest vision sees clear. He had escaped her influence, if, indeed, he had ever acknowledged any influence of hers. As a child he had been obliged to obey her, and even as a youth the influence of the household—that decent, tranquil, graceful household at Easton—which henceforward Tom would compare so contemptuously with his own 'place,' and the wealth which was soon to be his—had kept him in a fashion of submission. But Tom had always looked at his mother with eyes in which defiance lurked: there had never been in them anything of that glamour with which some children regard their mother, finding in her their first ideal. It had always been a weariness to Tom to be confined to the restraint of her society. When they were children even, he and his sister had schemed

together to escape from it. She was dimly aware that even Janet—— These things are hard for a mother to realise, but there are moments when they come upon her with all the certainty of fate. Her influence! She could have laughed or wept. As it was with the father, so would it be with the son. For that moment at least poor Carry's perceptions were clear.

But what could she say? She said nothing; not even to Beaufort could she disclose that miserable insight which had come to her. Your own children, how can you blame them to another, even if that other is your husband? how say that, though so near in blood and every tie, they are alien in soul? how disclose that sad intuition? Carry never said a word. She shook her head; not even perhaps to their own father could she have revealed that discovery. A mother's part is to excuse, to pardon, to bear with everything, even to pretend that she is deceived and blinded by the partiality of love, never to disclose the profound and unutterable discouragement

with which she has recognised the truth. She shook her head at Beaufort's arguments, leaving him to believe that it was only a woman's natural severity of judgment against the sins with which she had no sympathy. And by-and-by she allowed herself to be comforted. He thought that he had brought her back to good sense and the moderation of a less exacting standard, and had convinced her that a boyish escapade, however blamable, was not of the importance she imagined. He thought he had persuaded her not to be hard upon Tom, not to reproach him, to pass it over as a thing which might be trusted to his good sense not to occur again. Carry did not enter into any explanations. She had by this time come to understand well enough that she must not expect anyone to divine what was in her heart.

Meanwhile Janet, who was vaguely informed on the matter, and knew that Tom was in disgrace, though not very clearly why, threw herself into his defence with all the fervour that was in her nature. She went

and sat by him while he lingered over a late breakfast with all the ruefulness of headache. 'Oh, Tom, what have you done?' she said. 'Oh, why didn't you come in time for dinner? Oh, where were you all the afternoon? We were looking for you everywhere, Jock and I.' Jock was an Erskine cousin, the eldest of the tribe.

'What does it matter to you where I was?' said the sullen boy.

'Tom! everything about you matters to me,' said Janet, 'and for one thing we couldn't make up our game.'

'Oh, that humbugging game. Do you think I'm a baby or a girl? I hate your tennis. It isn't a game for a man.'

'Quantities and quantities of gentlemen play. Beau plays. Why, the officers play,' cried Janet, feeling that nothing more was to be said.

Tom could not refuse to acknowledge such authority. 'Well, then, it isn't a game for me, playing with girls and children. A gallop across country, that's what I like, and to see

all father's old friends, and to hear what they thought of him. By Jove, Janet, father was a man! not one to lounge about in a drawing-room like old Beau;' here the boy's heart misgave him a little. 'Beau's kind enough,' he said; 'he doesn't look at a fellow as if—as if you had murdered somebody. But if father had lived——'

'I wonder——' Janet said, but she did not go any further. Her light eyes, wondering under her black brows, were round with a question which something prevented her from putting. The possibility of her father having lived confused all her thoughts. She had an instinctive sense of the difficulties conveyed in that suggestion. She changed the subject by saying unadvisedly, 'How bad you look, Tom! Were you ill last night?'

He pushed her away with a vigorous arm. 'Shut up—you!' he cried.

'You are always telling me to shut up; but I know you were to have taken in Miss Ogilvie to dinner—that pretty Miss Ogilvie—and when you did not come, it put them all

out. I heard Hampshire telling Nurse. He said something about "your boozing Mr. Tom," and Nurse fired up. But afterwards she cried—and mother has been crying this morning; and then you look so bad. Do tell me if you were ill, Tom.'

He did not reply for some time, and then he burst out: 'Mother's such a bore with her crying! Does she think I'm to be a baby all my life?'

'Do you know,' said Janet, 'you're very much like that portrait of father in the hall—that great big one with the horse? Mother looks frightened when she passes it. He does look a little fierce, as if he would have scolded dreadfully,' the girl added, with the air of making an admission.

'I would rather have been scolded by him,' cried the boy—'No, he wouldn't have scolded, he would have known better. A man like that understands fellows. Jan, we're rather badly off, you and me, with only a woman to look after us, and *that* Beau.'

'Do you call mother a woman? You

might be more civil,' said Janet: but she did not contradict this assertion, which was not made for the first time. She, too, had always thought that the ideal father, the vague impersonation of kindness and understanding, who would never mock like Beau, nor look too grave like mother, was something to sigh for, in whose guard all would have gone well. But the portrait in the hall had daunted Janet. She had felt that those black brows could frown and those staring eyes burn beyond anything that her softly nurtured childhood had known. She would not betray herself by a word or even a thought if she could help it, but it could not be denied that her heart sank. 'I wish,' she said, quickly, 'you'd leave off breakfasting, Tom, and come out with me for a walk. What is the good of pretending? One can see you don't want anything to eat.'

'Walk!' said Tom. 'You can get that little sap to walk with you. I've got to meet a fellow—Blackmore's his name—away on the other side of the moor at twelve. Just ring

the bell, Jan. In five minutes I must have Bess at the door.'

'It's twelve o'clock now. Don't go to-day. Besides, mother——'

'What has mother to do with it?' cried Tom, starting up. 'I'm going, if it was only to spite mother, and you can tell her so. Do you think I'm tied to mother's apron-string? Oh, is it you, Beau? I—am going out for a ride.'

'So am I,' said Beaufort, entering. 'I thought it likely that would be your intention, so I ordered your horse when I ordered mine. Where did you say you were going? I caught somebody's name as I came in.'

'He said he was—a friend of my father's,' said Tom, sullenly.

'Ah! it is easy for a man to say he is the friend of another who cannot contradict him. Anyhow, we can ride together so far. What's the matter? Aren't you ready?' Beaufort said.

'He has not finished his breakfast,' said Janet, springing to Tom's defence.

'Oh, nonsense! at twelve o'clock!' said Beaufort, with a laugh. And presently, notwithstanding the youth's reluctance, he was carried off in triumph. Janet, much marvelling, followed them to the door to see them mount. She stood upon the steps, following their movements with her eyes, dimly comprehending, divining, with her feminine instincts half awakened. Tom's sullen, reluctant look was more than ever like the portrait, which Janet paused once more to look at as she went back through the hall. She stood looking for a long time at the heavy, lowering face. It was a fine portrait, which Torrance had boasted of in his time, the money it had cost filling him with ill-concealed pride. It was the first thing which had shaken Janet in her devotion to the imaginary father who had been the god of her childhood. Tom was not so big; he was not tall at all, not more than middle height, though broadly and heavily made. It was very like Tom, and yet there was something in it which made the girl afraid. As she stood gazing with more and

more uncertainty upon the pictured face, Lady Car came quickly into the hall—almost running—in evident anxiety and concern. She stopped suddenly as Janet turned round, casting a half-frightened, shuddering look from the picture to the girl before it. There was something like an apology in her nervous pause.

'I—thought Tom was here,' she said.

'He has gone out riding—with Beau.'

'With Beau?' Lady Car breathed something that sounded like 'Thank God!'

'Is there anything wrong—with Tom?' said Janet, gazing round upon her mother with defiance in her eyes.

'Wrong? I hope not. They say not. Oh, God forbid!' Lady Car put her hands together. She was very pale, with a little redness under her eyes.

'Then, mother, if there's nothing wrong, why do you look like that?'

'Like that?' Lady Car attempted a little laugh. 'Like what, my dear?' She added, with a long-drawn breath, 'It is my foolish

anxiety; everybody says it is foolish. It is *plus forte que moi.*'

'I wish you would not speak French. Tom,' said Janet, 'is well enough, though he doesn't look well. He ate no breakfast; and he looked as if he would like to take my head off. Isn't Tom—very like father?' she added, in a low voice.

They were standing at the foot of the picture, a full-length, which overbore them as much in reality as imagination, and made the woman and the girl look like pigmies at his feet. Carry gave a slight shiver in spite of herself.

'Yes,' she said faintly; 'and, my dear—so are you too.'

Janet met her mother's look with a stolid steadiness. She saw, half sorry, half pleased, Lady Car's eyes turn from the picture to her own face and back again. She had very little understanding of her mother, but a great deal of curiosity. She thought to herself that most mothers were pleased with such a resemblance—so at least Janet had read in books.

She supposed her own mother did not care for it—perhaps disliked it because she had married again.

'You never told us anything about father,' she said, 'but Nurse does a great deal. She told me how he—was killed. Was that the horse?'

'Yes,' said Lady Car, with a trembling which she could not conceal.

'Is it because you are sorry that you are so nervous?' said Janet, with those dull, light eyes fixed upon her, which were Torrance's eyes.

'Janet!' cried her mother, 'do not ask me about it.' She said, in a low, hurried voice, 'Is it not enough that it was the most terrible thing that ever happened? I cannot go back upon it.'

'But afterwards,' said the girl, impelled by she knew not what—some influence of vague exasperation, which was half opposition to her mother, and half disappointment to find the dead father, the tutelary divinity of this house to which she had been eager to come, so

different from her expectations—'afterwards—you married Beau.'

'Janet!' Lady Car cried again, but this time the shock brought back her dignity and self-control. 'I don't know what has got possession of you, my dear, to-day. You forget yourself—and me. You are not the judge of my actions, nor will I justify myself before you.' She added, after a time, 'Both Tom and you are very like your father. After a while he will be master here, and you perhaps mistress till he marries. Your father—might have been living now' (poor Carry grew pale and shuddered even while she pointed her moral)—'if he had not been such a hard rider, so—so careless, thinking he could go anywhere. Do you wonder that I am anxious about Tom? You will have to learn to do what you can to restrain him, to keep him from those wild rides, to keep him——' Lady Car's voice faltered, the tears came to her eyes. 'I believe it is common,' she said, 'that a young man, such as he is growing to be, should not mind his mother

much. Sometimes, people tell me, they mind their sisters more.'

'Tom does not mind me a bit,' said Janet, 'oh, not a bit—and he will never marry. He does not like girls.'

'Perhaps he will change his mind,' said Carry, with a faint smile. 'Boys often do. Will you remember what I have said, dear, if you should ever be mistress here?'

'But how can I be mistress? Where will you be? Why should there be any change?'

'The house is Tom's, not mine. And I shall be at my own house at Easton—if I am living.'

'Oh,' said Janet. Carry, though a little roused in her own defence, almost quailed before the look in the girl's eyes. 'You will be happier then,' she said, with the air of an assailant hurling a stone at his victim; 'for you will be all by yourself—with Beau.'

'Go upstairs, Janet: I can have no more of this!'

'I will not,' she cried; 'you said it was Tom's house, not yours. He would not let me

be sent away out of his hall, from father's picture, for—anyone—if he were here.'

Carry raised her eyes and saw him standing behind his child. There seemed a dull smile of triumph in his painted eyes. 'You thought they were yours—but they are mine,' Torrance seemed to say. Both of them! their father's in every nerve and fibre—nothing to do with her.

CHAPTER X

APART from these painful struggles with her children which were quite new to Lady Car, there were many things that pained her in her residence at the Towers.

First of all there was her nearest neighbour, her dearest friend, her only sister Edith; the dearest companion of her life, who had stood by her in all her troubles, and to whom she had given a trembling support in her struggle, more successful than poor Carry's against the husband her father had chosen for her. Edith had succeeded at last in marrying her only love, which was a poor marriage for an Earl's daughter. They had, indeed, finally, both of them, made poor marriages; but what a contrast between them! Carry living ignobly with the husband of her choice upon Torrance's

money, the result of her humiliation; while Edith was at the head of a happy, frugal family, carefully ordered, with little margin for show or pleasure, but yet in all the plenitude of cheerful life, without a recollection to rankle, or any discord or complication in all her candid existence. Her father had not been able to force the will of Edith. She had not loved her John any better than poor Carry had loved in her early tender youth the lover of all her dreams, the Edward Beaufort who was now her husband; but Carry had not been able to resist the other husband, the horrible life. Even in that Edith had so much, so much the advantage over her sister! And then—oh, wonder to think of it—— John—John, from whom nothing had been expected, except that he should show himself, as he had always done, the good fellow, the honest gentleman, the true friend he was, whether by development of his own respectable mind or by the influence of Edith (though she was never clever like Carry), or by the united force of both, John had long been one of the

most important men in the district, member for his county, trusted and looked up to both by his constituency at home and the people at head-quarters, who took his advice, it was said, on Scotch affairs more than anyone's; whereas Edward—— Carry had long made that poignant comparison in her heart, but to see them together now bowed her to the ground with a secret humiliation which she could never acknowledge—not to her sister, who also in the old days had put so much faith in Beaufort's genius; not to Edward himself—oh no, to humiliate him. He did not seem to feel the contrast at all himself, or, if he did perceive it, he thought it apparently to be to his own advantage, speaking now and then of the narrowness of practical men, of the deadening influence of politics, and of how completely John Erskine's interest was limited to matters of local expediency and questions before Parliament. 'And he used to have his share of intelligence,' said all unconscious the useless man, whose failure his wife felt so passionately. Then, as if this were not enough,

there was Jock, little Jock, who was younger than Janet, only fourteen, but already at Eton like Tom, and holding a place above that of the seventeen-year-old big lower boy. The reader must understand that this history is not of to-day, and that in those times big lower boys were still possible, though it is so no longer. Tom was only a lower boy, and little Jock might have fagged his cousin, had it not been that Jock was in college, on the foundation, saving the money which was not too plentiful at Dalrulzian. 'A Tug!' Tom had cried with contempt intensified by the sense of something in his mother's eyes, the comparison which made her heart sick. Little Jock at fourteen, so far above the boy who was almost a man: John Erskine, in his solid good sense, so much more important a man than Edward with his genius *manqué*. It went to Carry's heart.

It is difficult to feel that sense of humiliation, that overwhelming consciousness of the superiority of another family, however closely connected, to our very own, without a little

grudge against the happy, the worthy, the fortunate. Carry loved her sister tenderly, and Edith's happiness was dear to her; but the sight of that happiness before her eyes was more than the less fortunate sister could bear. She could not look upon Edith's bright boy, with his candid countenance, without thinking with a deeper pang of Tom's lowering brows, and that horrible look of intoxication which she had seen in his face; nor could she see her brother-in-law busy and cheerful with his public work, his table piled with letters, blue-books, all the paraphernalia of business, without thinking of Beaufort's dilettante ease, his dislike of being appealed to, his 'Oh, I know nothing of business!' Why did he know nothing of business; why was he idle, always idle, good for nothing, while others—oh, with not half his powers!—were working for the country? It was still Carry's desperate belief that no one had half his powers—yet sometimes she said to herself that, had he been stupid as some were, she could have borne it, but that it was the waste

of these higher qualities which she could not bear. Even this little refuge of fancy was taken from her on the occasion of a meeting about some county movement, to which her husband was called as the guardian of young Tom, and where he had to make a speech much against his will. His speech was foolish, tedious, and ignorant—how indeed should he know about the affairs of a Scotch county?—while John Erskine held the matter and the attention of the hearers in his hand. 'I thought Lady Car's new husband had been a very clever man,' she heard, or fancied she heard, someone say as the people dispersed. Perhaps she only fancied she heard it, caught it in a look. And how they applauded John Erskine, who did so well!—oh, she knew he did well, the master of his subject and of the people's sympathies; whereas what information could poor Edward have, what common interest with all these people? Poor Edward! Carry's heart contracted with an ineffable pang to think she could have called him so.

She loved Edith all the same—oh, yes! how could she fail to love her only sister, the person most near to her in all the world? But yet she shrank from seeing Edith, and felt at the sound of her happy voice as if she, Carry, must fly and hide herself in some dark and unknown place, and could not bear the contact of the other, who had the best of everything, and in whose path all was bright. To sympathise with one's neighbour's blessedness, when all that makes her happy is reversed in one's own lot, is hard, the hardest of all the exercises of charity. Carry said to herself that she was glad and thankful that all was so well with Edith; but to hide her own face, to turn to the wall, not to be the witness of it, was the best thing to do. To look on at all, with the aching consciousness of failure on her own part, and smile over her own trouble at Edith's happiness, was more than she was able to do: yet this was what she did day after day. And she read in Edith's eyes that happy woman's opinion of Tom, her verdict upon Beaufort, and her disappoint-

ment in Janet. Though Edith said nothing, Carry knew all that she could have said, and even heard over intervening miles, and through stone walls, how her sister breathed with a sigh her melancholy name. Poor Carry! Her heart fainted within her to realise everything, yet she did it, and covered her face and covered her ears not to hear and see that pity, which she could neither have heard nor seen by any exercise of ordinary faculties. But the mind by other means both sees and hears.

'Edward,' she said to her husband suddenly one day, 'we must leave this place. I cannot bear it any more!'

He turned round upon her with a look of astonishment. 'Leave this place! But why, my love?' he said. His surprise was quite genuine. He had not then, during the whole of her martyrdom, acquired the faintest insight into her mind.

'There is no reason,' she said hastily, 'only that I cannot—I cannot bear it any more.'

'But is not that a little unreasonable, Carry? Why should you go away? It is only the middle of September. Tom does not go back to school for ten days at least—and after that——'

'Edward, I hate the place. You knew that I hated the place.'

'Yes, my love; and felt that it was not quite like my Carry to hate any place, especially the place which must be her son's home.'

'I never wanted to come,' she said, 'and now that we have proved—how inexpedient it was——'

'Don't say so, dear. I have told you my opinion already. The best women are unjust to boys in these respects. I don't blame you. Your point of view is so different. On the contrary, we should have brought Tom here long ago. He ought to have learned as a child that there were men calling themselves his father's friends who were not fit company for him. I think he has learned that lesson now, and to force him away from a place he

is fond of, as if to show him that you could not trust him——'

'It is not for Tom,' she said; 'Edward, cannot you understand? it is for myself.'

'You are not the sort of woman to think of yourself when Tom's interests are at stake. We ought to stay even after he is gone, to make all the friends we can for him. For my own part, I like the place very well,' Beaufort said. 'And then there is your sister so near at hand. You must try to forget the little accident that has disgusted you, Carry. Think of the pleasure of having Edith so near at hand—and that excellent fellow John—though he's too much of an M.P.'

It was with purpose that Beaufort laughed, with that gentle and friendly ridicule of his brother-in-law, to carry her thoughts away from the accident—from Tom's escapade, which he thought was the foundation of Carry's trouble. And what could she say more? She did not, could not, tell him that Tom's look had reminded her of another, and that Torrance himself, standing in full length

in the hall, claiming its sovereignty, master of all that was within, kept the miseries of her past life and her unsatisfied heart too terribly before her. Of that she could say nothing to her husband, nor of Janet's rebellion, nor above all of what was intolerable in Edith's gentle society, the sense of her superior happiness, her pity for poor Carry! He might have divined what it was which made the house intolerable to her; but if he did not, how could she say it? Thus Lady Car gradually achieved the power of living on, of smiling upon all who surrounded her with something in her eyes which nobody comprehended, but which some few people were vaguely aware of, though they comprehended it not.

'Poor Carry!' Lady Edith said, in the very tone which Lady Car heard in her heart: but it was said in John Erskine's library at Dalrulzian, with the windows closed, five miles away.

'Why poor Carry?' asked her husband; 'if you were to ask her, she would say she

was a happy woman, happy beyond anything she could have hoped. When I think of her with that brute Torrance—where is she now, but in such different circumstances.'

'Oh, John, the circumstances are different; Edward is very nice: but——'

'But what?'

'Carry is not like you and me,' said Edith, shaking her head.

'No: perhaps so much the better for us. She is fanciful and poetical and nervous, not easy to satisfy; but the comparison—must be like heaven after hell.'

Edith continued to shake her head, but said no more. What was there to say? She could not perhaps have put it into words had she tried, and how get John to understand it?—a man immersed in public business, fearing that soon he should need a private secretary, which was an expense quite unjustified by his means. She patted him on the shoulder as she stood behind his chair, and said, 'Poor John, have you all these letters to answer?'

'Every one,' he said, with a laugh. 'You are in a compassionate humour to-day. Suppose you answer a few of them for me, instead of saying poor John.'

This was so easy! If she had not been so busy with the children she was the best of private secretaries! Alas! there was nothing to be done for poor Carry in the same simple way. Nor in any way, Edith reflected, as she sat down at her husband's table: a sympathetic sister must not even venture to show that she was compassionate. She must conceal the consciousness of his father's look in Tom Torrance's face, and of the fact that Beaufort's book had never been written, and that his name was altogether unknown to the world save as that of Lady Caroline Torrance's second husband. Oh, poor Carry! Edith said again. But this time only in the depths of her own heart, not to John.

The only other person who saw the change in Lady Car's look was Janet, who had defied her mother. The girl was in high rebellion still. She spent her life as much as

she could with Tom, seconding powerfully, without being aware of it, the watchful supervision of Beaufort, who, if he had failed her in so many respects, was anxiously and zealously acting for Lady Car in her son's interests. Janet seized upon her brother on every occasion when it was possible. She managed to ride with him, to walk with him, to occupy his attention as nobody else could have done. It is true that Tom had no delicacy on the subject of Janet, and sent her away with a push of his elbow when she bored him, without the least hesitation; but in her vehemence and passion she did not bore him for the short period of his holidays which remained. She had told him of her rebellion with a thrill of excitement which shook her from head to foot. The crisis was the greatest that had ever happened in her life. She could not forget it, not a word that had passed nor a look. Tom had contemplated her with an admiration mingled with alarm when he first heard the tale of her exploit. 'You cheeked mother!' He had

scarcely done more himself, though he was a man and the master of all: and Janet was only a little girl, of no account at all. But her fervour, her passion seized hold upon him, and as it occupied herself in the overwhelming way with which a family conflict occupies the mind, Janet became as the sharer of an exciting secret to Tom. They watched their mother's looks and every word she said in the light of that encounter. Neither of them was capable of believing that it had passed from Lady Car's mind, while still they dwelt upon it, making it the theme of long conversations. 'I say, do you think she'll say anything to me?' Tom asked, with some anxiety.

'I don't know; but if she does you'll stand by me, won't you, Tom?'

'Oh, I say!' Tom replied. 'Beau would make a fuss if I said anything to mother. He has a way of speaking that makes you feel small somehow.'

'Small? You! When you are the master! Why, mother said so, though she was so cross.'

'Oh yes, of course I'm the master,' said Tom. 'But you should hear Beau when he gets on about a gentleman, don't you know? What's a gentleman? A man that has a place of his own and lots of money, and no need to do anything unless he likes—if that's not a gentleman, I don't know what is.'

'And does Beau say—something different?' Janet asked, with a little awe.

'Oh, all kinds of nonsense; that it's not what you have but what you do, and all that. Never take a good glass—well, that's what Blackmore, father's friend, calls it—a good glass—nor say a rude word—and all that sort of thing. By Jove! Jan, if it's all true they say, father was a jolly fellow, and no mistake.'

'Do you mean that he did—that?'

Tom gave vent to a large laugh. 'Did—what? Oh, I can't tell you all he did. He rode like anything; flew over every fence and every ditch that nobody else would take, and enjoyed himself. That's what he did—till he married, which spoils all a man's fun.'

'Oh, Tom!'

'Well, it does—you have to give up—ever so many things, and live like an old woman. I shan't marry, I can tell you, Jen, not for years.'

'Then I shall stop with you, Tom, and keep the house.'

'Don't you be too sure of that,' said Tom; 'I shall have too many fellows coming and going to do with a girl about the place.'

'But you must have some one to keep house. Mother said so! She is not going to have me at Easton—that I am sure of; and if I am not to keep house for you, Tom, what shall I do?' said Janet, with symptoms of coming tears.

Then Tom did what the men of a family generally do when a foolish sister relies upon them. He promptly threw her over. 'You should not have cheeked mother,' he said.

CHAPTER XI

NEXT day the brother and sister went out riding by themselves. The game had been but poorly preserved during Lady Car's sway, and had not been of great importance at any time, so that Tom's time was by no means absorbed by the shooting to be had, and Janet had begged for one long ride with him before he went back to school. It was a bright September afternoon, the air crisp with an autumnal chill, enough to make the somewhat sluggish blood thrill in the veins of the boy and girl, who were so like each other and had a certain attachment to each other—more strong, as was natural, on Janet's side than on Tom's. Lady Car had come out to the door to see them ride away. 'Take care of Janet,' she had said. Beaufort's warning look, and her own consciousness, very different from

that of Beaufort, that what she said would not bear the least weight, prevented her from saying more. But perhaps she looked more as she followed them with anxious eyes. 'Don't, Carry,' her husband said as he drew her into the house—'don't show any distrust of the boy.'

'Distrust?' she said. 'I don't think he cares what I show.'

'My love! don't think so badly of the children.'

'Oh, no; I don't think badly of them. They are so young, they don't know; but it is true all the same. They don't mind how I look, Edward: which must be my blame and not theirs,' she added, with a faint smile; 'how should it be theirs? It is only part of the failure. Some people make no impression on—anyone. They are ineffective, like what you say of a wall-paper or a piece of furniture.'

'These are strange things to say,' said Beaufort, gravely.

'Silly things,' said Lady Car. 'If you are

not busy, let us take a stroll about the gardens. I have not been out to-day.'

She knew he was not busy, and she had given over even wishing him to be so. Desire grows faint with long deception and disappointment; but he was always kind—ready to stroll in the gardens or anything she pleased.

'What did mother think I was going to do with you? Take you round by the Red Scaur and break your neck?' Tom said to Janet.

'Oh!' cried Janet to Tom, with wide-open eyes; then added in a low tone, 'that was where father was killed. I have never been there.'

'And I'm not going to take you there. It's all shut up ever since. But I'll tell you what we'll do, Jan. We'll have a long spin—as far as Blackmore's farm.'

'Blackmore's farm! That is the place——'

He gave a loud laugh.

'Well, and what then? A thing may happen once and not again. They were tremendous friends of father's. I don't mean friends like—like the Erskines and so forth.

Blackmore's not a gentleman, but he's a rattling good fellow. And you should just see his stables. There's one hunter I'd buy in a minute if I had my liberty. It's ten miles, or perhaps a little more. Perhaps you're not up to that.'

'Oh, yes, I'm quite up to it. But I wonder if we should go—it gets dark so soon—and perhaps mother——'

'Oh, bother mother!' cried the boy. 'We can't at our age be always stopping to consider what an old lady thinks.'

'Mother's not an old lady, Tom.'

'She's a great deal older than we are, or she couldn't be our mother. Come, Jan, are you game for a long spin? It's almost the last time these holidays. Hurrah, then, off we go!' And off they went in a wild career, Janet following breathless, gasping, her dark hair flying behind her, her hat often in danger, wherever he led. She would not allow that she had any fear; but it was a long ride, and the way was confused by the cross cuts which Tom knew only imperfectly, and which

made it longer, besides leading them over moors and across fields which excited their horses and kept the young riders at a full strain, to which Janet's immature powers were quite unaccustomed. She was dreadfully dishevelled and shaken to pieces upon their arrival at the large rough establishment to which her brother had already paid many visits, and where they were received by a chorus of innumerable dogs and lounging men whose appearance was very alarming to Janet. They looked like keepers, she thought, or grooms, not like people who would naturally be greeted as friends, which was what Tom was doing, shaking hands with the big and bearded master of the house and the younger man, presumably his son, and calling out salutations in as good an imitation of the broad country dialect as he could accomplish to the others. Janet was aware that her own aspect was very wild, and she was very tired; but she clung to her saddle when that big gamekeeper approached with a mixture of pride and shame. 'So this is your sister,

Maister Tom? Charlie, cry on your mother,' cried the man; 'the mistress will be here in a moment, missie. Let me lift ye down.'

'No, no,' Janet said, 'we can't wait long. We must soon go back, it will be dark. Oh, Tom, we must get back.'

'Nonsense, Jan! Now I've got here I mean to stay awhile. And Blackmore's awfully jolly; he'll take you through the stables. Come, jump down.'

'Cry upon your mother, Charlie,' said Blackmore again. 'The young leddy thinks we're a' men folk here, and she's frichtened. But ye must not be frichtened, my bonnie doo. Hey, Marget, where's the mistress? And the pownçy's a' in a lather. Pit your hand upon my shoulder if you'll no let me lift ye down.'

When Janet saw a woman appear at the door hurrying out in a cap and a white apron, she allowed herself to be lifted from her horse, feeling all the time as if she had fallen into some strange adventures such as were described in books, not anything that would happen to girls like herself in common life.

She did not know that she might not be detained, locked up somewhere, forced to sign something, or to come under some fatal obligation as happened to the heroines of some old-fashioned novels which she had found in the library at the Towers. The mist of fatigue and alarm in her eyes made her even more confused than it was natural she should be in so new and unexpected a scene. And the rough and dingy house, the clamour of the dogs, the heavy steps of the man who followed her in, the sense of her own dishevelled and disorderly condition, and of the distance from home, quite overcame poor Janet. 'Oh, Tom, let us go home,' she cried, in an agony of compunction and fear.

'Is it Miss Torrance from the Towers? Dear me, but it's a long ride for her—over long—and a wild road. But you must rest a little now you're here, and I'll get you a cup of tea,' said the woman of the house. She was a fresh-coloured, buxom woman, not at all like a brigand's housekeeper, and she smiled upon Janet with encouraging kindly looks.

'I'm real glad to see your sister, Maister Tom; but you're a thoughtless laddie to bring her so far, and her not accustomed to rough riding. Marget, is the kettle boiling—for the young leddie must have some tea?'

'And you can bring in the hot water, and a' the rest of it,' said Blackmore, 'for us that are no so fond of tea—eh, Maister Tom? After your ride a good glass will do ye nae harm.'

Janet sat still and gazed while these hospitable preparations were going on. The large table was covered with oilcloth, not unconscious of stains. And the men gathered round one side upon which a tray with 'the hot water' and a black bottle and a strange array of glasses, big and little, had been placed. This seemed the first thing thought of in the house; for Marget, the big servant-woman (everything was big), brought the tray, pushing open the door with it as she bore it in in front of her before the order had been given. And presently the fumes of the hot 'toddy' filled the room, pungent and strong, making Janet feel faint and sick. The men flung themselves

into chairs or stood about, filling the other end of the room—a small, rough, dark crowd, with Tom in the midst. They were all very 'kind' to Tom, patting him on the shoulder, addressing him by name, filling his glass for him, while Janet, alone at the end of the table, looked on alarmed. The mistress was bringing out from a cupboard cups and saucers, a basin of sugar, and other preparations for tea.

'It would do the little miss far more good to taste a glass o' my brew, and put some colour into her cheeks,' said the master of the house.

'Haud your tongue, goodman, and leave the young lady to me. Tak' you care what you're about. You'll get both yoursel' and other folk into trouble if you dinna pay attention.'

'Toots! a glass will harm naebody,' Blackmore said.

'I want my sister to see that mare,' said Tom—'that mare, you know, Blackmore, that you said you'd keep for me. I want her to

see the stables. I told her all about you, and that you were tremendous friends——'

'Ah, laddie!' said Blackmore, 'the sight of you brings many a thing back. Many and many's the time that your father——'

'I told her so,' said Tom with his glass in his hands. 'Here's to all of you. And I mean to stick to father's friends.'

'Tom!' cried Janet with a start. The smell of the whisky, the crowd of men, the loud voices and sound of their feet upon the floor, scarcely deadened by the thin carpet, scared her altogether. 'Oh, Tom,' she said, 'I'm too tired to see anything. Let us get home—oh, let us get home!' and overcome by excitement and confusion, Janet began to cry.

'My bonnie dawtie,' said the mistress, 'wait till ye get your tea.'

'Oh, let us get home,' cried Janet; 'it will soon be dark. I'm frightened to ride after it is dark. All those dreadful roads! Oh, Tom, let us get home—oh, Tom, let us get home!'

'Maister Tom,' said the mistress, 'it's true she says. It's not fit for a bit thing like her to be gallopin' a' those uncivilised roads in the dark. Charlie shall put in one of the horses in the dog-cart and drive her hame.'

'That will I,' said Charlie, rising with a great deal of noise. He was the best looking of the young men, and he put down his steaming glass with alacrity. 'I'll put in Spanker, and she'll gang like the wind.'

'Ye'll have to be very canny with her, for she's awfu' fresh,' said another of the men.

'Don't be a fool, Jan,' cried the boy; 'she'll ride home fast enough. And I'm not going to have it; do you hear, Charlie? What's the good of making a fuss? I'm not going to have it,' he cried, stamping his foot. 'Do you want to get me into a row? Why, I as good as gave my word——'

He stopped short himself, and they all paused. Janet too, hastily choking the sob in her throat, gazed at him with a startled look.

'Maybe it was never to come back here

that ye gave your word, Mr. Tom?' said Blackmore rising up; 'I would guess that by the looks of ye. Well, ye'll keep your word, my young man; at least, ye'll as near keep it as is possible now. Charlie, out with the cairt, man! what are ye waiting for? and take the young lady hame. It was nane of her own will, that's clear, that brought her here. Ye can say that; if it was his fault, it's clear that it was nane of hers. Ye had better take him on behint, and we'll send the horses back the morn.'

'By Jove,' shouted Tom, 'I'll not be taken on behind! I'll ride my own horse or I'll not stir a step—and catch me ever coming out with her again,' he cried with an oath which made the heart which was beating so wildly in Janet's breast drop down, down to her shoes. But when she found herself in the dog-cart by Charlie Blackmore's side, wrapped up warm, and flying like the wind, behind Madam Spanker who was so fresh, Janet's sensations turned into a consciousness of *bien-être* which was very novel and very sweet. She had been persuaded

to take the cup of tea. She had even eaten a bit of scone with fresh butter and marmalade, which was very good. A warm shawl was wrapped round her shoulders; and the delicious sensation of repose and warmth over her tired limbs, while yet sweeping at so great a pace over the country, with the wind in her face and the long darkling roads flying past, was delightful to Janet. The sound of Tom's horse's hoofs galloping, now behind, now in advance, added to the sense of supreme comfort and pleasure. She had been so tired, and the prospect of riding back had been so terrible. She felt as if flying through the air, which caressed her cheek, as, warmly tucked in by Charlie Blackmore's side, she was carried home. Charlie was very 'kind'—almost unnecessarily kind. He spoke loud in her ear, with intonations at which Janet wondered vaguely, finding them very pleasant. He told her a great many things about himself, how he had never intended to stay at home 'among the beasts': how he had been a session at college and meant to go back again: how he

had once hoped to be something very much better than a horse-couper like his father, and how to-day all his ambition had come back. Swept along so lightly, so smoothly, with such ease, with such warmth and comfort, almost leaning against Charlie Blackmore's strong shoulder, with his voice in her ear, and the sweetness of the wind in her face, Janet felt herself held in a delightful trance almost like sleep, yet which was not sleep, or how could she have felt the pleasure that was in it? It was only when the drive was almost over, and the mare made a whirl into the avenue, scarcely to be held in till the gates were opened, and, flying after that momentary enforced pause like an arrow under the dark waving of the trees, that her heart suddenly sprang up with a sickening throb at the thought of what mother would say. Janet had been in a sort of paradise. She came down now in a moment to all the anguishes of earth. She broke in upon something Charlie Blackmore was saying with the utmost inattention and inconsequence. 'Can you

hear Tom?' she said. 'Oh, where is he? Tom, Tom!'

'He is just behint us; don't be frightened. He is all safe,' said Charlie, casting a glance behind.

The mare made a start at this moment, and, straining at the curb, bounded on again. Someone had come out upon the road almost under her nose—a dark figure, which just eluded the wheel, and from which came a voice almost echoing Janet's—

'Is that Tom?'

'Oh, it's me, Beau,' cried Janet wildly, 'and Tom's behind.' She was carried on so quickly that half the words were lost.

'Was that your stepfather? They will be anxious about ye. I would say'—Charlie made a little pause to secure her attention—'I would say you were passing near our place, never thinking ye had come so far, and that my mother came out to ye, seeing ye so tired, and bid me to bring you hame in the cairt—that's what I would say.'

'Say!' cried Janet, fully roused up. 'Do

you mean that I should tell mother that? But it would be a lie.'

'Deed, and so it would,' said the young man with a shamefaced laugh. 'But to make an excuse for yourself is aye pardonable, do ye no think? And then it would save Mr. Tom. Be you sure now my father knows he's given his word against it, he shall never be asked into our house more.'

'Oh,' said Janet, 'I could not say anything I had made up. When the moment comes and mother looks at me, I can only say—what has happened.'

'But nothing has happened,' said Charlie. 'Except,' he added, 'one thing, that I'll maybe tell you about some day. But that has happened to me, and not to you. Miss Janet, you'll not forget me clean altogether?'

'Oh, how should I forget you,' cried Janet with a sob, 'when I know I shall get into such dreadful trouble as I never was in before in all my life! Oh, mother!'

The girl had thrown off her wraps and tumbled down from the dogcart, almost

before it had stopped, into the middle of the group on the steps, which consisted of Lady Car, wrapped in a great shawl, her sister, and half the servants in the house.

'Janet! Oh, where have you been? And where is Tom? What has happened?—tell me,' cried Lady Car, taking her daughter by the arms and gazing into her eyes with an agonised question. The arrival of the cart at such headlong speed seemed to give a sort of certainty to all the fears that had been taking shape among the watchers.

'Oh, Mozer!' Janet cried, her childish outcry coming back in the extremity of her apprehension and consciousness. But Charlie Blackmore, with his wits about him, called out from the cart, 'There's nothing wrong. Mr. Tom he's just behind. They've ridden owre far and wearied themselves. Mr. Tom he's just behind. But my mare's fresh—she'll no' stand. Let go her head, dash ye! Do ye hear? She'll no stand.'

The little incident of the mare whirling round, the gravel flying under her feet, the

groom recoiling backwards, turning an unintentional summersault upon the grass, made a pause in which everybody took breath.

'Thank God!' cried Lady Car, 'if that's all. Is that all? You are not concealing anything, dear?'

Janet stood in the hall when she had managed to twist out of her mother's hold. Her eyes had a wild sparkle in them, dazzled from the night; her hair was hanging dank about her shoulders; her hat tied on with Mr. Blackmore's handkerchief. She looked dazed, speechless, guilty, with fear in her face and in her soul. She looked as if she might be—have had the habit of being—struck and beaten, standing trembling before her mother, who had never harmed a fly in all her gentle life.

'Mother, we went too far; and then the —woman came out—the—the lady, and said I was too tired. He was to drive me home.'

'Well! and that was all? God be thanked there has been no accident! But where is Tom?'

'Mr. Tom is just coming up the avenue, my lady,' said one of the men.

'Then all is right, and there was really nothing to be afraid of,' said Lady Car, with an agitated laugh.

Was Janet to be let off so easily? She stood watching her mother with uneasy alarm, while all attention was diverted to Tom, who jumped off his horse in a similar pale suspicion and fear, but with brows more lowering and eyes half shadowed by the eyelids. Tom had made up his mind as he came along what he was to do. He did not wait for the outburst of scolding which he expected. 'It wasn't my fault,' he said, with a gleam of his shadowed eyes to where Beaufort was coming in behind him. 'She had made up her mind she would see the mare, and I had to take her. I knew it was too far.'

Janet stood aghast with her mouth open taking in every word. A cry of protest rose up in her breast, which she had just comprehension enough to stifle. 'Never mind just

now, my boy,' said Beaufort; 'all's well that ends well: but you have given your mother a great fright. You can tell me after how it was.'

'I'd better tell you at once,' Tom repeated. 'She had set her heart on seeing the mare. There was no harm, I suppose, in telling her about the mare. And I thought she was more game than she is. That's all about it. I thought we could have gone into the stables without seeing—the people you made me promise about, Beau. But I couldn't help it when I saw how tired she was. And Charlie drove her home—that's all.'

The cry of protest in Janet's throat did not get utterance, but it produced a gasp of horror and astonishment as she stood staring in her mother's face. She could not look at Tom. Lady Car was looking at him unsuspectingly with her faint smile—that smile which Janet felt meant something more than anyone thought. And there was no more said.

CHAPTER XII

JANET went upon no more expeditions with Tom. His lie struck her like a shot, going through all her defences. She had almost lied for him, according to Charlie Blackmore's instructions; lied, or at least suppressed the truth, giving her mother to understand that there was no purpose at all in their ride, but only that they had gone too far—to save him, that he might not be blamed. But when Tom arrived with his lie all ready, in which there was no hesitation, Janet, standing aghast looking on, too much startled to contradict him or say a word, felt as if he had suddenly landed a blow at her, flung an arrow like the savages she had read of—which went through and through, cutting not only to her heart, but to the last refuge of her intelligence, the

recesses of her not too lively brain. It was not only pain, but a painful desire to understand, which moved her. Why did he do it? What did he mean by it? It seemed almost impossible to believe that it was only the familiar childish effort to clear himself by blaming her. 'It's Janet—it's not me.' She had said herself in the nursery days, 'It's not me—it's Tom,' in the sudden shock of a fault found out. Was that all he meant, or was it something more? Tom's explanation afterwards did not mend matters.

'Well!' he said, 'it *was* you—you know you wanted to see the mare. I told you you weren't game for it, but you swore you were. And whose fault was it but yours for breaking down and letting it all out?—spoiling my fun in every way. For the Blackmores are as proud as the devil——'

'Don't speak like that,' cried Janet with a shudder.

'They are though, just as proud as the devil, though they're nothing but horse-coupers. I knew I was done for when I said

that I had given my word. The old man fired up like a rocket, and I'll never be able to go there any more, which is all your fault.'

'But, Tom, if you gave your word——'

'Don't be silly,' cried Tom, 'that's not like giving your honour between you and another man. What's Beau? he's like one of the masters in school. They know you don't mean it; they know you'll get out of it if you can, and they're always on the watch. Not the least like another fellow of your own sort that you give your honour to. Of course I should keep that. But mother or Beau is quite different. You're forced to do that, and they know you never mean to keep it all the time.'

This reasoning silenced Janet, though it did not convince her. She did not know what reply to make. A boy's code of honour was a thing she did not understand, and she had always been accustomed to serious discrepancies between his ideas of what was meant by a promise and her own. Their training had been the same, but Janet had

always dumbly in the depths of her mind put a different meaning to words from that which Tom adopted. It was possible that his point of view might be right—for him—about giving one's word to a master, or to Beau; but her mind returned to the question that concerned herself with a keener sentiment.

'I don't know about that,' she said; 'but you needn't surely have said it was me?'

'Why, I did it—to please you!' cried Tom. 'I thought you'd rather. They can't do anything to you. And *you* never promised. And they can do a deal to me,' said the boy reflectively. 'They can stop all my fun—or nearly. They've got all my money, and whatever I say it does matter. People will take Beau's word sooner than mine. But they can do nothing to you, a girl at home. Mother would never put you on bread and water, or shut you up in your room, or that sort of thing. You'll have a jaw, and that will be all. Now they would never let me off with a jaw. I thought you'd be the first to say I should put it upon you, Jan.'

Once more Janet was silenced. She felt vaguely that to take it upon herself and to have the blame thrown upon her by another were two different things: but at the same time she felt the imputation of not having put herself in the breach at once to defend her brother. She had done so to her own consciousness, falteringly putting forth Charlie Blackmore's fib. But Tom did not know that, and he thought her ungenerous, wanting to vindicate herself, not ready to screen him, so that she was silenced on all sides of the question, and could not make any stand. But in her heart Janet still felt the startling pang with which she heard him make his excuse. No doubt there had been already similar crises in her life: but she was no longer in the nursery age. This made her less anxious for his company during the rest of his stay before he went back to school, though Janet was staunch to his side, and refused to breathe a word to his disadvantage, even during the serious 'jaw' which she received. Lady Car's 'jaw' however was very mild. She put her

arm aound the passively resisting girl, and talked to her of what was a woman's duty. 'A sister is such a thing for a boy,' she said. 'Often when he will not listen to anybody with authority he will listen to his sister; if, instead of going with him on wild expeditions, she tries to persuade him the other way—rather to go with her.'

Janet listened with a great sense of wrong in her heart, but she restrained everything that would harm Tom. All that she said was—

'We went out merely for a ride, mother. We did not mean—to go anywhere.'

'I am willing to believe that, Janet,' said Lady Car. And there the incident ended, but not the effects of it. Nothing more followed indeed till Tom had gone, but the next day after that, Janet, going to her cousin's at Dalrulzian, where she was allowed to ride alone upon the old pony, suddenly came upon Charlie Blackmore walking along the road. She recognised him with a leap of her heart. Oh, would he stop and talk? Oh, what

would he say to her and she to him? It was with terror, yet with a thrill of pleasure as well, that Janet saw him start, as if he had suddenly seen her, and stand still until she came up. He meant to keep up the acquaintance it was clear.

'Miss Torrance, I scarcely hoped I would have had this chance. It seemed ower good to be true.'

'Oh, yes, it is me,' said Janet, embarrassed.

'You need not tell me that; I saw it was you as far off as een could carry,' said Charlie, forgetting his dramatic start. 'I hope you are quite well; but I need not ask, for you're blooming like any rose.'

Janet felt herself grow red in reply to this compliment. She knew that she was usually pale, and did not bloom like the rose, but it was kind of him to say so. She had a consciousness that in books girls had generally things like this said to them, and she was not ill pleased.

'I hope,' said Charlie, 'all passed off well, Miss Janet, yon night.'

'Oh, yes,' said Janet, 'quite well.'

'Mr. Tom never came back to bid us good-bye; and 'deed it was better not, for there's always a rabble of loose fellows about a stable-yard, and he was just as well away. Young lads at his age are better to keep out of mischief—as long as they can.'

'Tom has gone back to school,' said Janet demurely.

'Dod,' cried Charlie, 'it's a droll thing to hear of a lad going back to school that's man-grown like Mr. Tom. I had the care of all the beasts on my hands at his age; but he'll be going in for Parliament and that kind o' thing, and much learning, no doubt.'

'Oh, no,' said Janet; 'he says it's too much sap. He would like to be with the horses best.'

'And are you fond of horses too, Miss Janet?' said Blackmore with an ingratiating tone. 'We've got a bonnie wee beast yonder that would just do for you. If Mr. Tom were the master himsel' I would ask his leave to send it over to let you try it. It's a bonnie

little thing just fit for your riding. But I daur not take such a liberty,' said Charlie, 'while the auld folk are there.'

'My mother is not old,' said Janet with some indignation.

'Na; not her ladyship; but there's more than her. I would like to let you see that little beastie, Miss Janet. Some day if I should be this way with her—would you mount and try? You're too good a rider for an old brute like that.'

'Oh, mother would not be pleased,' cried Janet alarmed.

'It would do her ladyship no harm, for she need never know.—I'll take my chance; if you will but say ye would like to see her.'

'Oh——' said Janet. But someone just then appeared on the road, and Blackmore took off his hat and hurried away. The girl was much disturbed by this encounter, but there was something in the little mystery of it that pleased her. She went on to Dalrulzian with her heart beating a little, thinking that Mr. Charlie was very kind. He was a

man much older than Tom—almost twice as old. And he was a handsome fellow in his velvet coat, with a blue tie which was very becoming, and blue eyes which seemed to say a great many things which confused Janet. Next day she went out for a little along that quiet road with a faint expectation, wondering if perhaps—it might be possible? and lo, there was Charlie on horseback leading the most charming pony. He jumped off his horse when he saw her, and fastening it to a tree, showed her all the beauties of the other. 'What ails ye to jump on,' he said, 'and I'll take ye for a ride, not far, nothing to tire you?'

'Oh, I am not so easily tired,' said Janet, her eyes lighting up, 'but I have no habit—and then mother——'

'Her ladyship will be none the wiser,' said Charlie, 'and she knows I would take good care of you. She would never mind.'

'Do you think so?' said the girl. And in a moment—it seemed but a moment—she was pacing along by the side of the big horse,

every movement of which was restrained to harmony with her pony's smaller paces. Janet had been Tom's victim to follow at his pace—to do what he pleased. She had never before known the delight of being cared for, considered as the first object. She rode for an hour by Blackmore's side, excited, delighted, half persuaded that she was a fairy princess, with everything that was beautiful and pleasant made for her use.

This happened again and again, and nobody found it out. It was thought at the Towers that she had taken to wandering in the woods in her loneliness now that Tom had gone away, and though Lady Car remarked a changing colour, and that Janet's eyes sometimes were bright and sometimes dreamy, yet nothing like suspicion of any secret ever crossed her mind. No such thing entered the mind of anyone. And already the household was full of preparations for going away, which absorbed everybody. The first of October was the last day before the departure of the family from the Towers, and Janet

stole out unobserved as usual, for her last ride. Never had the pony carried her so lightly; never had the little escapade been so delightful: they came back slowly side by side, lingering, unwilling to acknowledge that it was over. 'I'll keep the pony for you, Miss Janet,' said Blackmore. 'Nobody shall touch her but myself. She shall be kept like a lady, like the bonnie lady she belongs to, till you come back.'

'Oh, but Mr. Charlie,' cried Janet, 'you must not do that. They would not let me buy her, and I'll have no money of my own for a long time—not for five years.'

'Money!' he cried; 'did you suppose I was thinking of money? Ye do me great injustice, Miss Janet—but it's no fault of yours.'

'Oh,' she cried, 'it was because you said she was mine. Now she cannot be mine unless I buy her—and I cannot buy her. Oh, what have I said wrong? I did not mean to say anything wrong.'

'That I'm sure of,' said Charlie, 'and

maybe you're too young to understand that the pony's yours and her master's yours, and not a penny wanted—but something else.'

Janet was greatly bewildered by the look in his eyes. She glanced at him, then turned her eyes away. She could not think what had happened. He was not angry. He looked quite kind; almost more kind than ever. But she could not look at him any more (she said to herself) than she could look at the sun shining. He was leaning down towards her from his big horse, and Janet felt very uncomfortable, confused, and distressed.

'Oh, but you must not,' she said—'not keep her for me. It is very kind, and I will never forget it, to let me ride her—and she is a delightful pony. But I could not take her as a present, and I could not buy her, and you must just—you must just—never mind, for I cannot help it. Oh, I am afraid it has been all wrong,' cried Janet, though she could not tell why.

'Not a bit,' said Charlie Blackmore. 'It's

been the happiest time I've had all my life, and if you will never forget, as you say——'

'How should I forget?' said Janet. 'You have been so very kind, and she is the most delightful pony I ever saw. But please let us go home now, for they will be sure to miss me, and everything is in a confusion; for it is our last day.'

'That's just the very reason why I would like to keep you a little longer,' said Charlie; 'for what am I to do after you're gone? I will just wait and think long till you come back. It's a long, long time till next year, and I'm feared you'll never think more of me, or the pony, when you're gone.'

'Oh yes I will, indeed I will,' said Janet. 'Oh, Mr. Charlie, let us get back. I am afraid somebody will see us—and mother will be vexed.'

'Well, if it must be so—here we are at the little gate,' he said with a sigh. He got off his horse and fastened it, and then lifted her off the pony. 'What are ye going to give me for my hire,' he said, holding her for

a moment. 'I've been a good groom to ye. Just a kiss for my pains before you go.'

'Oh!' cried Janet, wrenching herself away. Fright and shame and anger gave her wings. She darted in at the little gate which gave access to a side path towards the back of the house, and fled without ever looking back. But she had not gone far when she ran full upon Beaufort, who was going tranquilly along across the park, just where the path debouched. She was upon him before either of them perceived. Janet was flushed with shame and terror, and her eyes full of tears. She gave a cry of alarm when she saw who it was.

'Janet! What's the matter? You look as if something had happened.'

'Oh!' she cried, with a long breath. 'It is nothing, Beau. I was only frightened!'

'Who frightened you?' he said. 'What's the matter? Why, child, you are trembling all over. Are you running from anyone?'

'N——no!' said Janet, drawing herself away from his observation—and it flashed

into her guilty mind that she had passed some cows peacefully grazing. 'I was frightened—for the cows,' she said.

'The cows!' It was greatly in Beaufort's way that he was too much a gentleman to be able to suggest to anyone, especially a lady, that what she said was not true. He said with some severity, 'I did not know you were so nervous. You had better go at once to your mother. She has been looking for you everywhere.' He took off his hat in a grave way which made Janet more ashamed than ever, and went on without even looking back. She threw herself down on the grass when he was out of sight, and cried in a wild tumult and passion which she herself did not understand. Beau did not believe her. What did he think; what would he say? But this was not what made Janet cry.

Mr. Beaufort walked on startled to the gate, and when he emerged upon the road he saw someone riding off in the distance, a tall figure on a tall horse, which he thought he recognised; for Charlie Blackmore was a very

well-known figure. The horseman was leading a pony with a lady's saddle. Beaufort did not put two and two together, being too much bewildered by the suggestion of something mysterious that darted through his mind. But he shook his head as he walked along, and said 'Poor Carry!' under his breath.

Lady Car did not see Janet till she had bathed her eyes and calmed herself down. She had not, however, quite effaced the traces of her agitation. Her mother called her, and put an arm round her—'Janet, I can see you have been crying. Is it because you're sorry to go away?'

'Yes, mother,' said Janet trembling.

'It is very strange,' said Lady Car, 'and I am glad. Oh, I wish we could feel alike, dear, you and I. I used to think a girl would always follow her mother. The boy might take his own way, but the girl——. Why are you so fond of the Towers, dear?'

Janet trembled, for she was not thinking of the Towers, nor was she sorry, but only

startled, and frightened, and confused. But she dared not throw herself on her mother, and tell her what was in her mind. She said dully, with a summoning of old artificial enthusiasms which would not answer to her call, 'I suppose it is because we were born here.'

'Perhaps that is a reason,' Carry said.

'And then it's father's house, and it will be Tom's,' said the girl.

Her mother loosed her arm faintly with a sigh. 'Yes, my dear, these are all good reasons,' she said, resuming her habitual gentle calm. She had not been able to help making another little futile effort to draw her child to herself. And it had not been successful, that was all she knew. She could not have guessed with what tumultuous passion that young bosom was beating, nor how difficult it had been for Janet to keep down her agitation and say no more.

CHAPTER XIII

It was some years before the Towers was visited again. Tom went to Oxford and had a not very fortunate career there, which gave his mother a certain justification in resisting all attempts to take her back to what she felt to be so ill-omened a house. Beaufort took the common-sense part in these controversies. What did one house or another matter? he said. Why should one be ill-omened more than another? As well say that Oxford was ill-omened where Tom got into scrapes rather more easily than he could have done elsewhere; indeed, even Easton, the most peaceable place in the world, had not been without dangers for the headstrong boy whose passions were so strong and his prudence so small. A boy who is not to be trusted to keep his

word, who cares only for his own pleasure, who likes everything he ought not to like, and cares for nothing that he ought, how should he be safe anywhere? Beaufort was too polite to say all these things about Carry's boy, but he tried his best to persuade her that the discipline of having guests to entertain, and the occupation of shooting—'something to do,' which is so essential for every creature—would be the best things possible for Tom. Probably he was right, and she injudicious. Who can tell beforehand what procedure is the best? But poor Lady Car could not get out of her eyes Tom's wild aspect as he had burst into the hall on that dreadful evening across the track of the procession going in to dinner. Peccadilloes of this kind had since been kept out of her sight, and she had tried to convince herself that it was the place and not the boy who had been in the wrong. And Janet somehow had come to share her mother's disinclination for the Towers. Janet had received a letter, not long after her return to Easton, which had

plunged her into the deepest alarm; it had, indeed, reached her innocently enough without any remark, being taken for a letter from one of her cousins at Dalrulzian, but it frightened her more than words could say. She had despatched a furtive note in reply, imploring 'Mr. Charlie' not to write—oh, not to write any more!—and promising eagerly not to forget either him or the pony if he only would do what she asked, and not write again. And poor Janet had been on the tenterhooks for a long time, terrified every day to see another missive arrive. She could scarcely believe in her good fortune when she found herself unmolested: but she was too much frightened to wish to return to the Towers. And thus time went on, which is so much longer to the young than it is to the old. Lady Car indeed was not old, but the children were so determined on believing her so, and her life of disappointments had been so heavy, that she fell very early into the passive stage. All that she had done had been so ineffectual, the result had been so

completely unresponsive to her efforts; at least, it seemed the only policy to accept everything, to attempt nothing. Life at Easton had accordingly fallen into a somewhat dull but exceedingly comfortable routine. Beaufort's beautiful library was a place where he read the papers, or a novel, or some other unfatiguing book. Sometimes his studies were classical; that is to say, he went over his favourite bits of classical authors, in delightful dilettantism, and felt that his occupations were not frivolous, but the highest that could occupy the mind. He was quite contented, though his life was not an eventful one. He had, he said, no desire to shine. Sometimes he rode into Codalton to the County Club; sometimes he went up to town to the Athenæum, to see what was going on. His wife's society was always pleasant to him in the intervals. Nothing could be more agreeable, more smooth, and soft, and refined, and pleasurable than his life; nothing more unlike the life of high endeavour and power of which Lady Car had

dreamed. Poor Lady Car! She had dreamed of so many things which had come to nothing. And she had much to make her happy: a serene and tranquil life; a husband full of affection. Her son, indeed, was likely, people thought, to give her trouble. No doubt she had reason to be anxious about her son. But, happily, he was not dependent upon his own industry, nor was it of very much importance to him to do well at college. A young man with a good estate may sow his wild oats, and all be well. And this was the only rumpled leaf in her bed of roses, people said.

She herself never disclosed to anybody what was in her inmost heart. She had a smile for them all. The only matter in which she stood for her own way was that question of going to Scotland—not there, not there! but anywhere else—anything else. She fell into a sort of *petite santé* during these years. She said she was not ill—not ill at all, only languid and lazy; but gradually fell into the quiescent condition which might be appropriate

to a mother of seventy, but not to one of forty. Tom and Janet did not see much difference between these ages, and as for Beaufort, the subdued and gentle charm of his wife's character was quite appropriate to a cessation from active ventures. He liked her better almost upon her sofa, or taking a quiet walk through the garden leaning upon his arm, her wishes all confined within that peaceful enclosure, happy to watch the moon rise and the sun set, and apparently caring for nothing more. He talked to her of the light and shade, the breadth of the quiet soft landscape, the stars in the sky, or about the new books, and sometimes what was going on—everything he would have said. They were spectators of the uneasy world, which rolled on as if they were outside of it in some little Paradise of their own, watching how men 'play such pranks before high heaven as make the angels weep.' He was fond of commenting on all this, on the futility of effort, on the way in which people flung themselves against the impossible, trying to do what no

man could ever do, to affect the movement of the spheres. He would smile at statesmen and philanthropists, and all kinds of restless people, from his little throne on the lawn, looking out over the peaceful landscape. And Lady Car would respond with a smile, with a glance that often lingered upon him as he talked, and in which he sometimes felt there was something which he did not quite understand. But what could that be—that something that he did not understand? He understood most things, and talked beautifully. He was the most perfect gentleman; his every tone, his every thought was full of refinement. And Lady Car was well pleased, who could doubt? to lie back in her deep chair and listen. What happiness could a woman—a woman no longer young, not in very good health, an idealist, a minor poet—what could she desire more?

There came, however, a time when the claims of the Towers could no longer be ignored. Tom came of age, and Lady Car could no longer combat the necessity of going

back to hold the necessary festivities and put him in possession of his lands and his home. Tom had come altogether to blows with his college and all its functionaries by this time, and had been requested to remove himself from the University in a somewhat hasty manner, which he declared loudly was very good fun, but did not perhaps in his secret heart enjoy the joke of so much as he made appear—for he had a great deal of that Scotch pride which cannot bear to fail, even when he had done everything to bring the catastrophe about. He had not met with many reproaches at home, for Lady Car was so convinced of the great futility of anything she could say that, save for the 'Oh, Tom!' with which he was received, and the tear which made her eyes more lucid than usual, she made no demonstration at all of her distress. Beaufort looked very grave, but took little notice. 'It was evident that this must have come sooner or later,' he said coldly, with a tone in which Tom read contempt.

'Why did you send me then,' the young

man cried, reddening sullenly, 'if you knew that this was what must come?'

'I suppose your mother sent you—because it is considered necessary for a gentleman,' Beaufort said.

'And I suppose you mean I'm not one,' cried Tom.

'I never said so,' his stepfather answered coldly. Janet seized upon her brother's arm and drew him away.

'Oh, what is the good of quarrelling with Beau? Did you expect nobody was to say a word?' cried Janet.

'Well,' said Tom, 'they can't prevent me coming of age next year, whatever they do: and then I should like to know, who will have any right to say a word?'

'Mother will always have a right to say whatever she pleases, Tom.'

'Oh, mother!' he said. Janet shook him by the arm she held. She cried passionately—

'I wouldn't if it had been me. I shouldn't have let anyone say that what was needed for

a gentleman was too much for me. Oh, I would have died sooner!' Janet said.

He shook her off with a muttered oath. 'Much you know about gentlemen—or ladies either. I know something of you that if I were to tell mother——'

'What?' Janet cried, almost with a shriek.

'Oh, I know—and if you don't sing very small I'll tell; but, mind, I'll not say Oh Den! like mother. I'll turn you out of house and home if you carry on with any fellow when you're with me.'

'What do you mean?' said Janet: but her conscience was too much for her. She could not maintain a bold front. The recollection came burning to her cheeks, and brought a hot flood of tears to her eyes. 'I only rode the pony. I meant no harm. I didn't know it was wrong. Oh Tom! Tom, don't tell mother,' she cried.

'You had better behave, then,' said Tom, 'and don't think you can crow over me. I've done nothing at all. It's only those old

saps that cannot bear to see a young fellow having his fun.'

It was certainly a great contrast to the humiliated condition in which he came home to think of all the immense preparations that were making to do the young scapegrace honour. Very far from pointing a moral to young men of Tom's tastes was his triumphant coming of age after the academical disgrace. No disgrace, however, can hinder a young man from attaining his twenty-first birthday, nor change the universal custom which makes that moment a period of congratulation and celebration, as if it were by any virtue of his that the boy became a man. It occurred to some of the family counsellors who had to be summoned for the great occasion that, considering his past behaviour, Tom's majority should be passed over with as little merry-making as possible. But Beaufort once more was the young fellow's champion. He was not the sort of man to take lightly the stigma of the University, and therefore he was listened to with all the more attention. 'I must re-

peat again,' he said, 'that there is nothing in all this to prevent Tom from doing well enough in his natural position. It might be ruin to some boys, but not to him. I never expected him to do anything at Oxford, and I am not surprised at what has happened. But everybody is not thinking of this as we are. A great many people will never have heard of it, nor would they attach any importance to it if they did hear. I have told you before, Carry, that the best of women are unjust to boys. It is very natural that it should be so. Even now, however, there is nothing to prevent Tom from doing very well.'

'The thing is that he seems to be getting a reward for his foolishness, instead of any punishment,' said Edith Erskine, who was, as she thought, upholding her sister's view. As for Carry herself, she had said nothing. To discuss her boy's follies was more than she was capable of. She could not silence the others who spoke, but she only looked at them, she could not speak.

'He has been foolish at Oxford, and the

authorities there have punished him; but we have no right to put back the clock in his life, and keep him out of his rights for anything he has done. I am sure that is what his mother thinks——'

'His mother has always been too indulgent, and this is what has come of it,' said old Lord Lindores, shaking his head. He would have sent Tom off to Africa or somewhere with an unfortunate if highly paid bear-leader from the University to keep him in order, if Tom would have submitted on the verge of his lawful freedom to any such bondage; but this his grandfather did not take into account. He shook his head over Carry's indulgence, and did not at all understand the look which she turned upon him and in which there were unspeakable things. 'You may be angry if you please, my dear, but I must tell you my opinion. The boy has been spoilt all along. He is not of a nature to stand it; he wanted a vigorous hand over him. You should have remembered the stock of which he came.'

Lady Car looked at her father with a light in her mild eyes such as no one could remember to have seen there before. 'Why was my boy of that stock?' she said, in a voice which was very low, but full of a passion that could not be restrained. Her mother and sister started with one impulse to stop further utterance. 'Carry!' they cried.

'What? What did she say?' cried Lord Lindores; but neither Carry nor any of the others repeated what she had said.

After this strange little scene there was, however, no more said about Tom's coming of age, which they could not have kept back if they would. But all kinds of preparations were made to make the celebration worthy, if not of Tom, yet of the position which he ought to take in the county so far as wealth went. His long minority, and the scrupulous care with which both his estate and his money had been managed, made Tom one of the richest commoners in Scotland, the very richest perhaps whose income came from property alone, and not from trade; and

though the county did not recollect his father with very particular regard, nor anticipate very much from himself—for everybody knew those unsatisfactory points in Tom's history which it was hoped had attracted no observation—yet Lady Car had gained all respect, and for her sake, and perhaps a little for their own amusement, the neighbours threw themselves readily into all the details of the feastings, and drank his health, and wished him joy, with every appearance of friendliness and sincerity. And there were many ladies heard to declare that a good wife would just be the making of the young man. Perhaps this sentiment as much as respect for Lady Car made the county people warm in their sympathy. There were a great many young ladies in the county; it might very well happen that one of these was destined by Providence to be the making of the second Tom Torrance of the Towers. And the parents who thought, with a softened consideration of all the circumstances that had been against him, that a daughter of theirs might perhaps

have that mission to fulfil, had certainly much less to tolerate and forgive than Lord Lindores had when he married his daughter to Tom's father. Therefore everybody accepted the invitations that were sent out, and for a week the house blazed with light and rang with festive sounds, and life stirred and quickened throughout the entire neighbourhood. The long interregnum was over, and Tom had come into his kingdom.

Happily an event of this kind exercises a certain influence on all minds. Perhaps Lady Car allowed herself to be moved by her husband's optimism, and was able with him to believe that Tom might do very well notwithstanding his youthful indiscretions; perhaps it was only that mild and indulgent despair which had taken possession of her inmost soul, and which made it evident that nothing that could be done by her would affect her boy, and that all she was now good for was to tolerate and forgive; but at least she presided over all the rejoicings with apparent pleasure, sparing no fatigue, think-

ing of everything, resuming to a wonderful extent the more active habits of former years. And Beaufort played to perfection the *rôle* of the *père noble*, the dignified disinterested paternal guardian giving his support and countenance to the novice without ever interfering with his pretensions as the real master of the house. Indeed Beaufort, with his fastidious superiority, had much greater influence over Tom than his mother had, and overawed him as no one else was capable of doing; so that everything went well during this great era, and the young Laird appeared to the best advantage, making those parents of daughters say to each other that really there was nothing that May or Beatrice need object to. Such birds of prey as hung about the horizon even in these moral regions perhaps sharpened their beaks—but that was out of sight. And the only one of the party who did not wear a guise of happiness was Janet, about whom there hung a nervous haze of suppressed feeling altogether alien to her character and which no one could fathom.

Perhaps it would have been more comprehensible had anyone heard the occasional word which now and then dropped from Tom, and which he repeated with a mischievous boy's pleasure in the trouble he could create. 'Are you going on the pony to-day?' he would ask in Lady Car's presence, with a significant look and laugh. 'Are you off for the East road?' No one but Janet knew what he meant. He threw these stones at her, out of the very height of his own triumph. And Janet dared scarcely go out, even in the protection of her mother's company, lest she should see Charlie Blackmore turning reproachful eyes upon her. He did pass the carriage on one occasion and took off his hat, but the salutation was so universal that no one noted who the individual was: and Janet alone saw the look. Yet even for Janet nothing disagreeable happened during these eight days.

CHAPTER XIV

LADY CAR had done too much, the doctor said. The last dinner had been given; the last guest had departed, and life at the Towers was about to begin under its new aspect—a changed aspect, and one which those of the spectators who were free from any personal feeling on the subject regarded with some curiosity. How was Tom to assume his new position as head of the house in presence of his mother and stepfather? Were they to remain there as his guests? Were they to leave along with the other visitors? Tom himself had fully made up his mind on this subject. He was indeed a little nervous about what Beau would say, and kept his eyes steadily away from that gentleman when he made his little announcement, which was done

at breakfast on the first morning after the family party was left alone. It must be premised that Tom's birthday was in the end of July, and that by this time August had begun.

'I say, mother,' Tom said. He gave a glance round to make quite sure that the newspaper widely unfolded made a screen between himself and Beau. 'I mean to go in for the grouse this year on the Patullo moor.'

'I have always heard it was too small for such sport,' said Lady Car.

'Oh, I don't know that. You never would let me try. The keepers have had it all to themselves, and I daresay they've made a good thing out of it. But this year I'm going to make a change. I've asked a lot of fellows for the 12th.'

'You are losing no time, Tom. I am glad to find you are so hospitable,' said his mother.

'Oh, hospitable be hanged! I want to have some fun,' said the young master. 'And I say, mother'—he gave another glance at the newspaper which was still opened out in front of his stepfather. And Beau had made no

remark. 'Mother, I say, I don't want, you know, to hurry you; but a lot of fellows together are sometimes a bit rowdy. I mean, you know, you mightn't perhaps like—— You're so awfully quiet at Easton. I mean, you know——'

'That you want us to leave the Towers, Tom.'

'Oh, I don't go so far as that. I only meant—— Why, mother, don't you know? It's all different. It's—not the same kind of thing—it's——'

'I understand,' she said, in her quiet tones, and with her usual smile. 'We had taken thought for that. Edward, we had spoken of going—when was it?'

'To-morrow,' said Beaufort, behind his paper. 'That's all settled. I had meant to tell you this morning, Tom. No need to have been in such a hurry; you know your mother is not fond of the Towers.'

'I didn't mean that there was any hurry,' cried Tom, very red.

'Perhaps not, my boy, but it looks like it.

However, we're both of one mind, which is convenient. The only thing that is wanted is a Bradshaw, for we had not settled yet about the trains.'

'To-morrow's awfully soon. I hope you won't go to-morrow, mother. I never thought you'd move before a week at the soonest. I say! I'll be left all alone here if you go to-morrow,' Tom cried. But Beaufort took no notice of his remonstrance, and got his Bradshaw, and made out his plans as if it had been the most natural thing in the world. A few hours after, however, Lady Car, who had allowed that she was tired after the racket of the past week, was found to have fainted without giving any sign of such intentions. It was Janet who found her lying insensible on her sofa, and as the girl thought dead. Janet flew downstairs for help, and meeting her brother, cried, 'You have killed mother!' as she darted past. And the alarm and horror of the household was great. Tom himself galloped off for the doctor at the most break-neck pace, and in great compunction and

remorse. But the doctor was, on the whole, reassuring when he came. He pronounced the patient, who had by that time come to herself and was just as usual, though a trifle paler, to be overdone, which was very well explained by all that she had been going through, and the unusual strain upon her—and pronounced her unfit for so long a journey so soon. When, however, Beaufort informed him that the Towers had never agreed with his wife—an intimation at which the doctor, who knew much better than Beaufort did what the Towers had been to poor Lady Car, nodded his head understandingly—he suggested breaking the journey. And this was how it happened that the family went to St. Andrews, where many things were to happen which no one had foreseen. Tom, still compunctious, and as tender as it was possible for him to be, and unable to persuade himself that he was not to blame for his mother's illness, as well as much overwhelmed by the prospect of being left entirely to his own company for nearly a fortnight, accompanied the party to

that place. He thought he would take a look at the golf, and at least would find it easier to get rid of a few days there than alone in his own house. To do him justice he was a little anxious about his mother, too. To think that you have killed your mother, or even have been instrumental in killing her, is not a pleasant thought.

Lady Car got quickly well amid the sea breezes. They got her a house on the cliff, where from her sofa she could look out upon the sea, and all the lights and shades on the Forfar coast, and the shadows of the far distant ships like specks on the horizon, like hopes (she thought), always appearing afar, passing away, never near enough to be possible. She floated away from all acute pain as she lay recovering, and recovered, too, her beloved gift of verse, and made a very charming, but sad, little poem called 'Sails on the Horizon,' expressing this idea. Lady Car thought to herself, as she lay there, that her hopes had all been like that, far away, just within sight, passing without an

approach, without a possibility of coming near. None of these ships ever changed their course or drew near St. Andrews Bay: yet the white distant sail would hang upon the horizon line as if it might turn its helm at any moment and come. And hope had come only so to Carry—never to stay, only in the distance. In the quiet of convalescence and of that profound immeasurable despair which took the form of perfect peace, that renunciation of all that she had wished for on earth, it was a pleasure for her to put that conceit into words. It was only a conceit, she was aware.

Presently she became able to go out, to be drawn in a chair along the sands, or away in the other direction to the line of the eastern coast, with all its curious rocks and coves. About ten days after her arrival in St. Andrews Lady Car made one of those expeditions accompanied by Beaufort and Janet. They took her in her little vehicle as far as it would go, and then she walked a little down to the shore, to a spot which she

recollected in her youth, where a grassy bank of the close short seaside grass bordered a ridge of broken rocks higher than the level of the beach. Over this line of rock there was a wonderful view of the little town isolated upon its headland, with the fine cluster of the ruined cathedral, the high square tower of St. Rule, the grey heap of the destroyed castle, and the little port below, set in the shining sea; and great breadths of the blue firmament banded with lines of pearly cloud. Here Carry sat down to rest while her companions went further along the coast to the curious little bay with its bristling rocks, where stands the famous Spindle, left among the seapools by some gigantic Norma of the North. The wide air, the great sky, the sense of space and freshness, and separation from all intrusive things; and, on the other hand, the picture made by that cluster of human habitations and ancient work of man defaced and worn, standing in the rays of the afternoon sun, which streamed over it from the west, made a perfect com-

bination. The ridge of red rocks and piled stones which cut off all vulgarities of the foreground and relieved it in warm colour against the grey headland and the wonderful blue sea, shut in Lady Car's retreat, though the coast road wound on behind her, communicating by a rocky passage, almost like a stair, with the sands below. Lady Car seated herself upon the grass. She did not care even to sketch; all her old pursuits had dropped from her. She was content to sit still, with her eyes more often upon the wide line of the horizon than on any intermediate point, however attractive. There was a sort of luxury of the soul in that width of stainless silent air, which required nothing, not even thought, but filled her with a faint yet exquisite sense of calm. The peace of God—did she dare to call it so? Certainly it passed understanding. That she should sit in this beatitude in a calm so complete, with so many—oh, so many—things to make her anxious and to make her sad. Still so it was.

She did not know how long she had sat

there in that wide universe of sea and sky, when her attention was first called to voices underneath the ridge of rock. The sands beyond were on a lower level, and it might well be that people underneath might discuss the most private affairs without any thought of possible listeners above. Carry had heard the murmur of the voices for some time before she took any heed of them, or distinguished one from another. These tones she presently observed were very unlike the peace all around: there was a sound of conflict in them, and now and then a broken note as if the woman sobbed. For it was apparent at once that the two were a man and woman, and soon that there was some controversy between them. When Lady Car began to awaken out of her dream of calm to become aware of these two people below and the discussion or quarrel which was every moment increasing in intensity, she did not perhaps know how to make her presence known, or rather, perhaps, it was something in the sound of one of the voices which bewildered and

confused her. At first she thought with a vague trouble it was a voice she knew. Then she started from her grassy seat with a horrible sensation, as if she were hearing over again, though not addressed to herself, one of those mocking, threatening, insulting floods of words which had once been the terror of her life. Torrance! Had she lived to hear him speak again? She had escaped from all imagination of him in this beautiful and distant scene. What was it that like a terrible wind of recollection, like an hour come back from the miserable past, made her hear his voice again?

She had risen up in her dismay and alarm, almost with an impulse of flight, to get out of his way, lest he should find her again, when an impression almost more terrible still made her pause and hold her throbbing breast with both her hands. She turned her face towards the rock with a faint cry, and sank down again upon the grass. There could be no doubt that it was a man speaking to a woman over whom he had almost absolute power, a

husband to a wife—or perhaps—but Carry knew no other relationship than that which permitted such tones, and when her first irrational panic was over, she became aware that it was the voice of Tom.

To whom was he speaking? She did not ask what he was saying. She could not hear the words, but she knew them. A woman who has once borne such a storm recognises it again. To whom could Tom speak in that voice of the supreme?—mocking, threatening, pouring forth abuse and wrath. To whom did the boy dare to speak so? He had no wife.

The voices grow louder; the two seem to be parting; the man hurrying away, discharging a volley at his companion as he left her, the woman weeping, following, calling him back. Lady Car sat breathless, her terrified eyes fixed on the path behind, up which she heard him coming. 'Go back, I tell you; I have nothing more to say to you,' he cried.

His countenance, flushed with rage, ap-

pearing above the edge of the rocks, while he half-turned back, waving the other away—brought confirmation certain of Lady Car's fears. She rose again and made a step towards him, tottering in every limb, as in other days, when his father had beaten her to the ground with such another torrent. But to whom, to whom was the boy speaking? She cried out in a voice of anguish, 'Tom!'

He started in his turn so violently that he stumbled on the rocks and almost fell. 'Mother!' he cried instinctively. Then turned round with a hoarse roar of 'Back! back!' cursing himself for that betrayal.

'Tom, what is it? to whom were you speaking?—answer me! To whom did you dare to speak like that?'

'What are you doing here?' he said. 'Listening! I never knew you do that before, mother—come along! this isn't a place for you.'

'To whom were you speaking, Tom?'

'Me! I was speaking to nobody; there's some sweethearts or something carrying on

down there. I don't meddle with what is none of my concerns. Come along! I am not going to leave you here.'

He seized her arm to draw her away, and Lady Car saw that his rage had turned to tremor. He looked at her from under his lowering eyebrows with that fierce panic which is sometimes in the eyes of a terrified dog ready to fly at and rend anyone in wild truculence of fear.

'I am not going from here till my husband comes for me—nor till I know what this means,' said Lady Car. She was trembling all over, and her heart so beating that every wild throb shook her frame. But she was not afraid of her son's violence. And other steps were drawing near. As Lady Car leaned upon a corner of the rock supporting herself, there gradually appeared up the ascent a young woman in very fine, but flimsy attire, her face flushed with crying and quarrelling, dabbing her cheeks with a handkerchief like a ball all gathered up in her hand. The impression of bright colour and holiday dress

so inconsistent with the violent scene through which she had been passing, and the probable tragical circumstances in which the unhappy girl stood, threw a sort of grotesque misery into the midst of the horror.

'Oh!' cried the new comer, 'he called you his mother, he did! If you are his mother, it's you most as I ought to see.'

'Hold your cursed tongue,' cried Tom beside himself, 'and get off with you! I've told you so before. You're not fit to speak to my——to a lady. Go! go.'

'You think it grand to say that,' cried the girl, evidently emboldened by the presence of a third party, 'but you may just give it up. I'm not ashamed to speak to any lady. I've done nothing to be ashamed of. I've got my marriage lines to show, and my wedding ring on my finger. Look at that, ma'am,' she cried, dragging a glove off a red and swollen hand. It was with tears, and trouble, and excitement that she was so swollen and red. She thrust her hand with indeed a wedding ring upon it in Lady Car's face. 'Look at

that, ma'am; there can't be no mistake about that.'

'I must sit down; I cannot stand,' said Carry. 'Come here, if you please, and tell me who you are.'

'She's not fit to come where you are. I told you to go,' said Tom. 'Go, and I'll send somebody to settle—you've no business here.'

'If she's your mother, Frank, I won't deceive nobody. I'm Mrs. Francis Lindores, and I've got my marriage lines to show for it. I'm not ashamed to look anybody in the face. I've got my marriage li——'

'Mrs.——what?' said Lady Car.

'Mrs. Francis Lindores. I never thought but what he meant honourable, and my own mother was at the wedding and everything right. He wants to say now that it's no marriage; but it is—it is. It's in the register all right where we signed in the vestry. Oh Frank, I know you're only talking to frighten me, but your mother will make it all right.'

Lady Car and her son exchanged but one glance—on her part, a look of anguished

inquiry searching his face for confirmation of this tremendous statement—on his, the look of a fierce but whipped hound, ready to tear anyone asunder that came near him, yet abject in conscious guilt. The mother put her hand to her breast as if to hide where the bullet had gone in. She said in a voice interrupted by her quickened breathing,

'Excuse me a little, I am not very well: but tell me everything—tell me the truth. Did you say that you were——married to this young gentleman?'

'She'll say anything,' cried Tom hoarsely. 'She'll swear anything. She's not fit to come near you. Go away, I tell you, curse you—you shall have everything you want if you go away.'

'Be silent, Tom; at present she has me, not you, to answer. Tell me——'

'You call him Tom,' said the young woman with surprise; 'it's perhaps a pet name—for his real name is Frank Lindores: and that's on my cards that I got printed—and that's who I am: and I can bring wit-

nesses. My marriage lines, I've got 'em in the hotel where I'm staying. If you're his mother, I'm his wife, and he can't deny it. Oh, Frank! the lady looks kind. Don't deny it, don't deny it! She'll forgive you. Don't deny the truth.'

'The truth,' cried Tom, forgetting himself in his heat. 'You can see how much truth is in it by the name she tells you—and I wasn't of age till last week,' cried the precocious ruffian, with a laugh which again was like the fierce bark of the whipped hound.

All Lady Car's senses had come back to her in the shock of this horror. 'You married her—in the name of Francis Lindores—thinking *that*, and that you were under age would make it void. If you've anything to say that I should not believe this, say it quick, Tom—lest I should die first and think my boy a——'

She leant back her pale head against the rocks, and one of those spasms passed over her which had already scared the household at the Towers: but the superior poignancy of

the mental anguish kept Lady Car from complete unconsciousness. She heard their voices vaguely contending through the half-trance: then slowly the light came back to her eyes. The young woman was kneeling beside her with a vinaigrette in her hot hand. 'Oh, smell at this, do! it's the best thing in the world for a faint. Oh, poor lady! I wish I had never said a word rather than make her so bad!'

Lady Car opened her eyes to see the stranger kneeling with an anxious face by her side, while Tom stood, lowering, looking on. It crossed her mind that perhaps the boy would have been glad had she died, and this disclosure been buried with her. The stab of this thought was so keen that she came completely to herself, restored by that sharp remedy of superior pain.

'I do not think she is bad,' she said faintly. 'I think she has an honest face. Tom, is that true?'

'It's all a piece of nonsense, mother, as I told you. It was just to please her. She was

not too particular—to have the show of a wedding, that was all. She knew very well——'

The girl struggled to her feet. She seized him by the arm and shook him in her passion.

'I'll tear your eyes out,' she cried, 'if you speak like that of me! Oh, lady! we're married as safe as any clergyman could marry two people.'

'You fool!' cried Tom, 'there's no such person as Frank Lindores. And I wasn't of age.'

The young woman looked at him for a moment confounded. The colour left her excited face, she stood staring as if unable to comprehend, then, as her senses came back to her, burst into a loud fit of sobbing and crying, throwing herself down on the grass. 'Oh, oh, oh!' she cried, sobbing and rocking herself. 'Oh, whatever shall I do? Oh, what will become of mother?' Then rising suddenly to her knees she caught Lady Car's dress. 'Oh, lady, lady! you've got a kind

face; do something for me; make him do me justice; make him, make him——oh, my God, listen to him!' cried the girl, for Tom, in the horrible triumph he thought he had gained, was pealing forth a harsh laugh—a sort of tempest tone of exultation over the two helpless women at his feet.

Beaufort, with Janet at a little distance behind him, came suddenly upon this strange scene. He thought at first that his wife was ill, and hurried forward anxiously, asking, 'What is the matter?' He saw Carry pale as death, her mouth drawn, her eyes dilated, leaning back against the rocks, holding the hand of a girl unknown who knelt beside her, while Tom, who had laughed, stood over the pair with still that mirthless grimace distending his lips.

'Edward,' Lady Car said, 'I have something to ask you; something at once, before you ask me a question. A marriage under a false name—is that no marriage? Tell me—tell me quick, quick!'

'What a strange question!' he said. 'But

I know nothing about marriages in Scotland. You know people say——'

'It was not in Scotland. Quick, quick!'

'A marriage—when a false name is given?—meaning to deceive?'

She said 'Yes' with her lips without any sound, a faint flame as of shame passing over the whiteness of her face. Tom thrust his hands into his pockets and screwed his mouth as if he would have whistled, but no sound came. The girl faced round, always upon her knees, a strange intruder into that strange group, and stared at Beaufort as if he had been a god.

'I don't understand why you should ask me such a question. The marriage is good enough. The law doesn't permit——'

'Not if the man is under age?'

'He can be imprisoned for perjury if he has sworn he is of age—as some fools do; but what in the world can you want with such information as that?'

'Edward,' said Lady Car with some difficulty, her throat and lips being so dry, 'this is Tom's wife.'

CHAPTER XV

She never knew how she was taken home. A horrible dream of half-conscious misery, of dreadful movement when all she wanted was to lie down and be still, of a confusion of sights and sounds, things dimly seen in strange unnatural motion, voices all broken into one bewildering hum, always that sense of being taken somewhere where she did not want to go, when quiet and silence was all she desired, interposed between the rocky plateau of the shore, and her room, in which she opened her eyes in the evening in the waning light to find Janet and her maid by her bedside, her windows wide open to admit the air, and Beaufort in consultation with the doctor at the other end of the room. She had opened her eyes for a minute or two before everything settled into

its place, and she perceived fully where she was. She lay in great weakness, but no pain, remembering nothing, feeling the soft all-enveloping peace which had been round her like a mantle, covering all her wounds again. 'Are you there, my Den: and is that Edward?' she said. And it was not till some time after, till the soft shaded lights were lit in the room and all quiet, and Beaufort seated by her bedside reading to her, that she suddenly remembered what had passed. She put out her thin hand and grasped him by the arm. 'Edward, was that true?'

'What, Carry? Nothing has happened but that you have been ill a little, and now you are better, my love, and you must be quiet, very quiet.'

'It *is* true,' she said, with her fingers clasping his arm. 'My son did that; *my* son.'

'It is put all right,' said Beaufort; 'there is no deadly wrong done. And the girl is very young; she can be trained. Carry, my love!'

'Yes, I know. I must keep quiet, and I

will. I can put everything out of my thoughts now. God has given me the power. But he meant *that*, Edward.'

'God knows what he meant,' said Beaufort. 'He did not realise. Half the harm these boys do is that they never realise—'

'You say women are often unjust. Would men—look over that?'

He got up from his chair and put down his book. 'You must not question me,' he said, 'you must not think of it at all. Put it out of your thoughts altogether, my dear love. You must think of the rest of us—of me, and poor little Janet.' He added, after a moment, 'no one need ever know.'

Certainly Beaufort was very kind. He behaved in all this like a true gentleman and true lover. He would have plucked out altogether the sting of that great wound had it been possible, and he was quite unaware of the other stings he had himself planted undermining her strength. She looked up at him, lying there in her weakness, with her beautiful smile coming back, the smile which was

so soft, so indulgent, so tender, so all-forgiving, the smile that meant despair. What could she do more, that gentle, shipwrecked creature, unable to contend with the wild seas and billows that went over her head? What had she ever been able to do?

Janet, who did not know what was the meaning of it all, but had vague horrible fancies about Tom which she could not clear up, went out next day by herself in the bright August morning to get a little air. She had enough of her mother in her to like the sound of the sea, and to be soothed by it. And the half-comprehended incidents of the previous night and the alarm about Lady Car's state had shaken Janet. She thought, with the simplicity of her age, that perhaps if she went away a little, was absent for an hour or so from the room, that her mother would not look so pale when she came back, and Lady Car's smile went to Janet's heart. It was too like an angel's, she thought to herself. A living woman ought not to be too like an angel. Her eyes kept filling with tears as she

wandered along looking out upon the sea. But gradually the bright air and the light that was in the atmosphere and the warmth of the sunshine stole into Janet's heart and dried the tears in her eyes. She went into the green enclosure of the ruined castle and sat down upon the old wall looking out to sea. She could see the place where she and Beau had come upon that strange group among the rocks. She had not made out yet what it meant.

As she sat there gazing out and lost in her own thoughts and wonderings, a voice suddenly sounded at her ear which made her start—'Oh, my bonnie Miss Janet,' it said, 'have I found you at last!' Janet turned slowly round aghast. The colour forsook her face, and all strength seemed to die out of her. She had known it would come one time or other. She had steeled herself for such a meeting every time she had been compelled to leave the shelter of the Towers; but now that she was far away, in a place which had no association with him, surely—surely she should

have been safe now. And yet she had known beforehand, always known that some time this would come. His voice sank into her soul, taking away all her strength and courage. What hold Janet supposed this man to have over her who could tell? She feared him as if he had it in his power to carry her away against her will or do some dreadful harm. The imagination of a girl has wild and causeless panics as well as gracious visions. She trembled before this man with a terror which she did not attempt to account for. She turned round slowly a panic-stricken, colourless face.

'Why, what is the matter with you, my bonnie little lady? Are ye feared for me?'

'Oh, Mr. Charlie,' said Janet, 'don't speak to me here. If anybody were to see you! And mother—mother is in great trouble already. Oh, don't speak to me here!'

'Do you mean you will speak to me in some other place? I'm well content if ye'll do that —some place where we will be more private,

by ourselves. Ye may be sure that's what I would like best.'

'I did not mean that,' said Janet in great distress. 'Oh, Mr. Charlie, don't speak to me at all! I am very unhappy—already.'

'It will not make you more unhappy to speak to an old friend like me. And who has made you unhappy, my bonnie lady? I wish I had the paying of him. It'll be that loon of a brother of yours.'

'How dare you speak so of my brother?' cried Janet with momentary energy, and then she began to cry, unable to restrain herself in her agitation. 'Oh, go away! If you please, will you go away?'

'And do you want to hear no more of the pony?' said Charlie Blackmore. 'She's as bonny a little beast as ever stepped, and fit to carry a princess—or Miss Janet Torrance. I've kept my word. She's just been bred like a princess, without doing a day's work. I've kept her, as I said I would for you.'

'Oh, I hope you do not mean that,' cried Janet. 'Oh, Mr. Charlie, I hope it was not

my fault! I was very, very young then, and I did not know there was any harm in it. Oh, I hope you have not kept her for me!'

'What harm was there in it?' he said, putting his hand on her arm, which Janet drew away as if his touch had been fire. 'Come now, Miss Janet, you must be reasonable. There was no harm in it more than there is in a little crack by ourselves, between you and me.'

Janet shrank into the corner of the seat away from him. 'There was harm,' she said, 'for I never told mother; and there is harm now, for if anyone I knew were to come here and see us I would die of shame.'

'No, my bonnie lady, you would not die; that's too strong,' said Blackmore. 'And do you know it's not civil to draw away like that. When we met in the East road you were not so frightened. You gave me many a glint of your eyes then, and many a pleasant word. And do you mind the long rides we had, and you as

sorry when they were over as me? And the miles that I rode to bring you the pony and give you pleasure, though you turn from me now?'

'You were very kind, Mr Charlie,' said Janet in a trembling voice.

'I am not saying I was kind. I would not have done it if I had not liked it. But you were kind then, Miss Janet, and you're not kind now.'

'I was only a child,' Janet cried; 'I never thought. I know now it was very silly —oh, more than silly. If I beg your pardon, oh, Mr. Charlie, will you forgive me, and —leave me alone?'

'And what if that was to break my heart?' he said.

'Break your heart! Why should it do that? Oh, no, no, it would not do that; you are only laughing——'

'Me laughing! What if I had taken a fancy, then, for a bit small girl, and set my heart upon her, but kept out of the way for years not to see the bonnie little thing

till now that you're woman grown and understand? And all you say is to ask me to leave you alone? Is that a kind thing to say?'

'Mr Charlie,' said Janet desperately, 'I can hear by your voice that you are not in earnest; and as for taking a fancy, I was only a child, and that could mean nothing. And the whole of it was just—just sport to you and it is for a joke you're doing it now.'

'Joke! it's no joke,' he said. 'I know what you think; you think I'm not gentleman enough for you. But I'll have plenty of money, and your father, if he had lived, would not have turned me from his door. Hallo! who's there?' he cried, starting up as some one hit him sharply on the shoulder. Janet, looking up in fresh alarm, felt a mingled rush of terror and relief when she saw over Blackmore's head the lowering countenance of Tom.

'I say, Charlie get out of that,' said Tom. 'I'm not going to stand this sort of thing, you know. I may be going to the dogs

myself, but my sister shan't. Be off, I tell you, and leave her alone.'

'Am I the dogs, Mr. Tom? No such black dogs as you're going to, my friend. Keep your good advice to yourself, and don't intrude where you are not wanted. We can manage our affairs without you.'

'By Jove!' cried Tom, 'if you speak another word to my sister, I'll pitch you over the cliff!'

Blackmore began to laugh with an exasperating contempt — contempt which exasperated Janet, though Tom too had touched the same note of the intolerable. She sprang up hastily, putting out her arm between them. 'You are two men,' she said, 'but Tom is not much more than a boy, and you are quarrelling about me that wants nothing in the world so much as to get away from both of you. Do you hear me? I would not vex mother,' Janet cried, 'for all the men in the world. Oh, can't you see that you are like two fools wrangling over me?'

'Let him take himself off, then,' said Tom.

'And let him hold his tongue, the confounded young scamp!' cried the other, 'that dares to challenge me—when he knows I could lick him within an inch of his life.'

Tom was half mad with disappointment and humiliation. He was very proud in his way, with the mingled pride of the peasant and the *nouveau riche*, the millionaire and the (Scotch) clown. He had meant, after he had 'had his fun,' to have settled down when his time came, and to have married a lady like his mother. Without imagination, or sense, or principle, or restraint of honour, he had pursued his reckless career, too precipitate and eager in pursuit of pleasure to leave time to think, even if he had been able to think. The abominable treachery of which he had intended to be guilty had not touched his conscience, not having appeared to his obtuse understanding as anything worse than many 'dodges' which other fellows adopted to get what they wanted. And it was with a rage and humiliation unspeakable that he found himself—he, the son of the man who had

married Lady Caroline Lindores, married in his turn to a girl from a little Oxford shop, a little shopgirl, a common little flirt, less than nobody, not so good by ever so many grades as his mother's maid. To find that he had married her when he meant only to deceive her, and made her mistress of the Towers, which was as Windsor Castle to Tom, and put her in the place of Lady Car, was gall and bitterness to him. His conscience had given him little trouble, but his wounded pride, his mortification, his humiliation were torture to him. He had come out raging with these furious pangs, eager to find something, anything, with which he could fight and assuage his burning wrath. To pitch Charlie Blackmore over the cliffs, even to be pitched over them himself, and roll down the sharp rocks and plunge in the cold sea beneath, he felt as though it would be a relief from the gnawing and the rage within.

'Come on, then!' he cried, furious; 'I'll take no licking from any man, if he were Goliath. Come on!'

'Mr. Charlie,' cried Janet, putting out her hands, 'if it's true, you may do one thing for me. One thing I ask you to do as if you were the best gentleman in the world, and I will think you so if you will do it: leave me to him and him to me. And good-bye; and neither say you like us nor hate us, but just go—oh go! Do you hear me?' she said, stamping her foot. 'I ask you as a gentleman.' She had caught her brother by the arm and held him while she waved the other away.

'That's a strong argument,' said Blackmore. He was moved by what she said, and also by common sense which told him his suit was folly. 'If we're fools, you're none, Miss Janet Torrance,' he said with a laugh, 'which is more than I thought. What! am I to turn my back upon a man that's clenching his neives at me? Well, maybe you're right! There's none in the county will think Charlie Blackmore stands in fear of Tom Torrance. Yes, missie, you shall have your will. I'm going—good-bye to both him and you.'

'Do you think I'll let the fellow go like

that?' cried Tom, making a step after him, but perhaps his fury fell at the sight of the might and strength of the retiring champion —perhaps it was only the wretchedness in his mind that fell from the burning to the freezing point. He sat down gloomily, after having watched him disappear, on the bench from which Charlie Blackmore had risen.

'I don't care what becomes of me, Jan,' he said. 'I'm done. Nothing that ever happens will be any good to me now. I've choked that fellow off, that's one thing, and he'll never dare speak to you again. But as for me, I'm done, and I'll never lift my head any more.'

'Oh Tom!' Janet cried. She was too much excited by her own affairs to turn in a moment with this new evolution to his—but that panting cry bore any meaning according to the hearer's apprehension, and he was too deep in his own thoughts to need more.

'Yes,' said Tom, 'it's all over with me. Just come of age and lots of money to spend, and all the world before me, as you might say

—but I'll never have the heart to make any stand again. To think that all I've got, and might have done so much with, is to go to a woman that never had sixpence in her life and knows no more than a dog how to behave herself! As for hurting her, it wouldn't have hurt her, not a bit—and if she'd had the chance she would have done just as bad by me. Law,' cried Tom, with bitter contempt, 'what's the good of law when it can't protect a fellow before he comes to his full senses! To think I should have tied such a burden on my back, and done for myself for ever before I came of age. It's horrible,' he cried with the earnestness of conviction; 'it's damnable—that's what it is.'

'Oh Tom, perhaps it will not be so bad,' said Janet, putting her hand within his to show her sympathy. She was very uncertain as to what it was that caused this despair, and she had been vaguely impressed with the fact that this time what Tom had done was something terrible; but neither her own trouble nor any doubt about his conduct (which was so seldom

blameless) could quench the sympathy with which she responded to his appeal.

'Oh, yes, it will be quite as bad and worse —and I'm a ruined man,' cried Tom. 'Done for! although it was only last week,' he said with a piteous quiver of the lip which a half-grown moustache nearly shaded, 'that I came of age.'

Janet felt the pathos of this appeal go to the bottom of her heart. She did not know what to say to comfort him, and she could not keep her own eyes from straying after Charlie, who after all had been very kind, who had gone away at her prayer like the most complete of gentlemen. She was very thankful to be released, yet her eyes followed him with something like pride in his docility, and in the vigour and strength and magnanimity of her first lover. Though she was much afraid of him, Janet forgave him kindly as soon as he was gone. The tears came into her eyes for Tom's distress, while yet, with a thought for the other, she watched him with a corner of her eye over Tom's bowed head.

He turned round and took off his hat to her before he disappeared under the low arch, and Janet, in politeness and regret, made the faintest little bow and gave him a last glance. This made her pause before she answered Tom.

'It's all Beau's fault,' said Tom, as if he had been talking of stolen apples. 'She would never have been any wiser, nor mother either, if it hadn't been for Beau with his confounded law. And I don't believe it now,' he said; 'I won't believe it. Think, Jan—to be married and done for, and no way of getting out of it, before you are twenty-one!'

'But wasn't it—your own doing, Tom?'

Then Tom got up and gave vent to a great moral aphorism. 'There is nothing in this world your own doing,' he said; 'you're put up to it, or you're led into it, and one tells you one thing and another another. But when you've been and done it after what's been told you, and every one has had a hand in it to lead you on, then they

all turn round upon you, and you have to bear it by yourself. And everybody says it's your own doing. And neither the law nor your friends will help you. And you're just ruined and done for—before you ever had begun at all.'

'Oh Tom,' cried Janet, 'come home—and perhaps it will not turn out so bad after all.'

'It can't turn out anything but bad—and I'll just go and drown myself and be done with it all.'

'Oh Tom, Tom!'

He got up from her with his hands deep in his pockets and his gloomy head bent. 'Leave alone,' he said, pushing her away with his shoulder as in the old nursery days. 'Where's dinner? But I'll dine at the club, you can tell Beau, if they'll have me there.'

CHAPTER XVI

THERE could be no doubt that Beaufort behaved throughout this business in the most admirable way. He made the very best of it to Lady Car, who lay and listened to his voice as to the playing of a pleasant tune, sometimes closing her eyes to hear the better. She had got her death wound. Tom had never been the son she had dreamed. He was his father's son, not hers, and to see him succumb to the grosser temptations had been misery and torture to her. But the story of that fraud, so fully intended, made with such clear purpose, was one of those overwhelming revelations which go to the very heart. If a woman is unhappy in her married life, if she is tricked and cheated by fate in every other way, there is still

always the natural justice to fall back upon, that the children will be left to her—her children in whom to live a new life; to see heaven unfolding again; to have some faint reflection of herself; some flower of her planting, some trace that she has been. And when she has to confess to herself that the child of her affections, the thing that has come from her, the climax of her own being, is in fact all unworthy, a creature of the dunghill, not only base, but incapable of comprehending what is good and true, that final disenchantment is too great for flesh and blood. Nature, merciful, sometimes blinds the woman's eyes, makes her incapable of judging, fills her with fond folly that sees no imperfection in her own—and that folly is blessed. But there are some who are not blinded by love, but made more keen and quick of sight. She lay silent and listened while Beaufort performed that melody in her ears, feeling a poignant sweetness in it, since at least it was the most beautiful thing for him to do, yet with every word feeling more

and more the anguish of the failure and the depth of the death wound which was in her heart.

'There are boys who torture cats and dogs and tear flies asunder, and yet are not evil creatures,' Beaufort said; 'they have not the power of realising the pain they cause. They want imagination. They know nothing of the animals they hurt, except that they are there in their power to be done what they please with. My love, Tom is like that: it is part of the dreadful cynicism that young men seem to originate somehow among themselves. They think they are the subjects of every kind of interested wile, and that such a thing as—this'—Beaufort was not philosopher enough to name Tom's act more distinctly—'is nothing more than a sort of balance on their side.'

Lady Car opened her eyes, which were clear with fever and weakness, lucid like an evening sky, and looked at her husband with a piteous smile.

'My dearest,' he said hastily, 'I am saying

only how they represent such things to themselves. They don't take time to think—they rush on to the wildest conclusions. The thing is done before they see or realise what it is. And then, as I tell you, they think themselves the prey, and those, those others the hunters—and take their revenge—when they can.'

But it was hard to go on with that argument with her eyes upon him. When she closed them he could speak. When they opened again in the midst of his plea, those eyes so clear with fever, so liquid, as if every film had been swept from them, and only an all-seeing, unquenchable vision, yet tender as the heavens, left behind — he stopped and faltered in his tale: and then he took refuge in that last resort of human feeling—the thing that had to be done, the expedients by which a wrong can be made to appear as if it were right, and trouble and misery smoothed away, so that the world should believe that all was well.

The conclusion, which was not arrived

at for some time, was that which old Lord Lindores took credit to himself for having suggested before, 'and which might have put a stop to all this,' he said with a wave of his hand. It was Africa and big game for two or three years, during which 'the young woman'—the family spoke of her as if she had no name—should be put under careful training. It had been ascertained, still by Beaufort, who conducted himself to everybody's admiration, that 'the young woman' had no bad antecedents, and that so much hope as there could be in such a miserable business might be theirs. Tom was so thoroughly broken down by the discovery which humbled his clownish pride to the dust, and made him feel almost as poor a creature as he was, that he gave in with little resistance to the dictates of the family council. No unhappy university man, however, was beguiled into accompanying this unlikely pupil. He was given into the hands of a mighty sportsman, who treated him like a powder boy, and brought Tom, the Lord of

the Towers, the wealthiest commoner in the North, the experienced man of Oxford, into complete and abject subjection—which was the best thing that could have happened to him.

The 'young woman' was less easily subdued. She wrote to her relations that it had been all a mistake, but that family reasons had made it impossible for her husband and herself to disclose the true state of affairs before. That instead of being Mrs. Francis Lindores, she was Mrs. Thomas Francis Lindores Torrance, of the Towers, her dear husband being the son of Thomas Torrance, Esq., of the Towers, and of Lady Caroline Lindores, the daughter of the Earl of Lindores, from whom dear Tom took his second name, as they might see in any peerage; that her mother-in-law and all her new family were very nice to her, and that she was going off upon a visit with Lady Edith Erskine, who was her aunt, and dear grandmamma the Countess. And she ordered for herself at once new cards with

Mrs. F. T. Lindores Torrance upon them, which she thought looked far more distinguished-looking than the original name. But when Mrs. Tom became aware that dear grandmamma and her dear aunt meant to conduct her to an educational establishment, where she was to pass at least the two next years of her life, the young woman rebelled at once. She had never heard, she declared, of a married woman going to school; that her place was with her husband; that she had passed all the standards, and learnt to play the piano, and had taken lessons in French; that no woman, unless she were going to be a governess, wanted more; and, finally, that she flatly refused to go. It was more difficult, much more difficult, than with Tom to convince his wife: for she was still more ignorant than Tom, and thought his giving in ridiculous, and did not see why, with him or without him, she should not go and take up her abode at the Towers, 'and look after things,' which she felt must be in great want of someone to look after

them. She was made to yield at last, but not without difficulty, declaring to the last moment that she could not be refused alimony, and that she would take her alimony and go and live independent at home till her husband came to claim her, rather than go to school at her age. But Beaufort managed this too, to the admiration of everybody. He brought to bear upon the young woman pressure from her 'ome, where her mother, under his skilful manipulation, was brought to see the necessity of going to school, and declined to receive her rebellious daughter. This was at the cost of another allowance from Tom's estate, for it was not fit that Tom's mother-in-law should continue to earn her bread poorly without her daughter's assistance, in a poor little confectioner's shop. Beaufort managed all this without even betraying the name of this poor old woman, or where she lived, to the researches of the Lindores, for Lady Car was very tender of her boy's name even now.

And she was taken home—to Easton,

which she loved: and said she was much better, and was able to be out on her husband's arm, and sit on the lawn and watch the sun setting and the stars coming out over the trees. But she had got her death wound. She lay on the sofa for months, for one lingering winter after another, smiling upon all that was done for her, very anxious that Janet should go everywhere and enjoy everything, and that Beaufort should be pleased and happy. She asked nothing for herself, but gave them her whole heart of love and interest to everything that was done by them. She had her sofa placed where she could see them when they went out, and smiled when Beaufort said, always with a slight hesitation, for he thought it was not right to leave her, that he was going to ride over to the club, or to spend a day in town. 'Do; and bring us back all the news,' she said. And when Janet went away with compunctions to go to balls with her grandmother, Lady Car was the one who explained away all objections. 'Quite pleased

to have you go—to have Beau to myself for a little,' Lady Car said sometimes, a little vexing her child; but, when Janet was gone, urging Beaufort to the pleasure he longed for but did not like to take. 'It is just what I wanted that you should go to town: and you can bring me back news of my little Den.' Sometimes they were even a little piqued that she wanted them so little—poor Lady Car!

And thus quite gently she faded away, loved—as other people love, not as she loved: cherished and revered, but not as she would have revered and cherished; with a husband who read the papers and went to his club, and got very gracefully through life, in which he was of no importance to anyone, and her only son banished in Africa shooting big game. Janet was a good child, very good: but her mother never knew how near the girl was to her in the shadowy land where people may wander side by side, but without the intervention of words or some self-betrayal never find each other out. Perhaps had Janet

found the courage to fling herself down at her mother's side, and say all that was in her heart, the grasp of that warm hand might still have brought Lady Car back to life. But Janet had not the courage and everything went on in its daily calm, and the woman whose every hope had faded into blank disappointment, and all her efforts ended in failure, faded away. During the first summer Lady Car still went out to dine, and walked a little about the garden with her husband's arm; the next she was carried out to her sofa on the lawn. All went so very gradually, so very softly, that no one noted. She was very delicate. When that gets to be fully recognised, there seems no reason why it should not go on for ever; not so happy a state as perfect health, to be sure, but with no reason in it why there should be any further change.

One evening she was out of doors longer than usual—a soft lingering summer night—so warm that even an invalid could get no harm out of doors. She loved so to see the

daylight gradually fade away, and the stars come out above, and over all the wide champaign below a twinkle of little human lights here and there. She took almost a childish pleasure in those lights, thinking as much of the villages and scattered houses —identifying their humanity low down among the billows of the wood or the sweep of the upland slopes—as of the stars above. 'The greater and the lesser lights,' she said, and then murmured low to herself, 'Compensations,' under her breath.

'What do you mean by compensations, Carrie?'

'I do not much believe in them,' she said. 'Nothing can compensate for what one loses. It is better not. Looking to the east, Edward, see, there are no lights, but only that silvery misty greyness where any glory might lie hidden only we see it not. Now I have come so far as this I think I like that best.'

'So far as what, Carry?' Something cold and chill seemed to come over them

like a cloud. 'It is growing chilly, you ought to come indoors, my love.'

'Yes, presently. I have always been fond of the lights—like a baby; but look the other way. You would say at first there was nothing to be seen at all; but there are all the shades of greyness from one tint to another, and everything lying still, putting out no self-assertion, content to be in God's hand. And so am I, Edward.'

'Yes, my love.'

'Quite content. I have had everything, and—and nothing. The heart of it has always been stolen from me, all the lights put out; but the dark is sweet too; it is only dim, dim, not discernible—don't call it dark.'

'Carry! whatever you please, dear.'

'Edward, do you know what this means —the peace that passeth understanding?'

'Carry, my darling, you break my heart. No—how should I know?'

'I think I do,' she said softly. 'It lies upon your heart like the dew, yet nothing to bring it, no cause, a thing that is without

reason, what you would call irrational altogether—that passeth understanding. Edward, if ever you think afterwards, remember that I told you. I think that I have got it—I wanted other things, but they were not given me. I begin to think that this—is the best.'

'My dearest, let me carry you in; it is getting quite dark and chilly.'

'You are tired of my little sermon, Edward,' she said, with the faint tender smile which he divined rather than saw.

'I—tired? of anything you may say or do! But you must not be longer out in the night air. Come, Carry, let me lift you.'

Whether her mind had begun to wander, or if it was a prevision, or what moved her, no one could ever tell. She resisted a little, putting her hands on his arm. 'You must not forget,' she said, 'to give my love to Tom.'

Beaufort called loudly to her maid, who was waiting. 'It is too late, too late for her to be out! Come and take the cushions,'

he said in the sudden panic that had moved him.

'And my little Den,' she said, 'my little Den—they will perhaps as they get older —Edward, I am afraid I feel a little faint.'

He took her in his arms, his heart sinking with a sudden panic and blind terror as if the blackness of darkness was sweeping over him. But they succeeded in getting her to her room and her bed, where she said good-night and kissed him, and dropped sweetly asleep, as they thought—but never woke again. They found her in the morning lying in the same attitude, with the same smile.

Thus Lady Car ended the tragedy which had been going on unseen, unknown to anyone—the profound, unrivalled tragedy of her life. But so sweetly that no one ever knew the tragedy it had been. Her husband understood more or less the failure of her heart over her children — her son — but he never even imagined that it was he himself that had given the first and perhaps the

deepest blow; though not the *coup de grâce*, which had been left for Tom.

Poor little Janet was summoned home from the merry house to which she had gone, where there were many entertainments going on. She was roused out of the fatigue of pleasure, out of her morning sleep after the ball, to be told that her mother was dead. They thought the girl's heart would have burst. The cry of 'Mozer, Mozer!' her old child's cry, sounded to those who heard it like something that no consolation could touch. But, to be sure, her tears were dried, like all other tears, after awhile.

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